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THE

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

SERMONS PREACHED

BY

C. H. SPURGEON.

REVISED AND PUBLISHED

DURING THE YEAR 1904.

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On 5 May 1973 a memorial stone was erected on the site of the baptism of Spurgeon in the River Lark at Isleham Ferry.

Spurgeon walked the eight miles from Newmarket to Isleham on Friday, 3 May 1850, his mother's birthday. Two women were the other baptismal candidates. A cold, cutting wind blew down the river that divided Cambridgeshire from Suffolk, but it blew Spurgeon's timidity down to the sea as he publicly professed Christ before a congregation on both banks of the river and in boats on the river. The ferry boat was also crowded for the occasion.

TO

THE ONE GOD OF HEAVEN AND EARTH,

IN

THE TRINITY OF HIS SACRED PERSONS,

BE ALL HONOUR AND GLORY,

WORLD WITHOUT END,

AMEN.

TO THE GLORIOUS FATHER, AS THE COVENANT GOD OF ISRAEL;

TO THE GRACIOUS SON, THE REDEEMER OF HIS PEOPLE;

TO THE HOLY GHOST, THE AUTHOR OF SANCTIFICATION;

BE EVERLASTING PRAISE FOR THAT GOSPEL OF THE FREE GRACE OF GOD HEREIN PROCLAIMED UNTO MEN.

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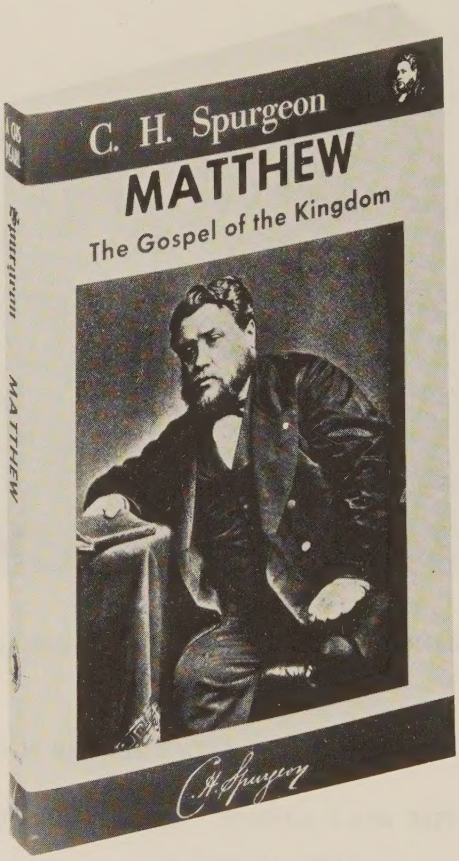

Matthew — The Gospel of the Kingdom

Except for the seven-volume work on Psalms, this is Spurgeon's only commentary on a Biblical book. It was nearly finished when he died and was completed from his own spoken and written words, previously transcribed. Mrs. Spurgeon wrote the introduction; she laments, "It is the tired worker's final labour of love for his Lord. It is the last sweet song from lips that were ever sounding forth the praises of his King. It is the dying shout of victory from the standard-bearer, who bore his Captain's colours unflinchingly through the thickest of the fight." 263 double-column pages, paperback.

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Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

"GOD HATH SPOKEN!—REJOICE!"

A Sermon

PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 31ST, 1903,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Thursday Evening, October 12th, 1876.

"God hath spoken in his holiness; I will rejoice, I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth."—Psalm cviii. 7.

THERE is an old promise, concerning God's people, which says, "Before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear." This text is one of the instances in which the Lord has dealt with his saints upon the lines of that promise. Read the preceding verse. David there prays, "Save with thy right hand, and *answer* me;" and while he is waiting for God to answer him, he remembers that God has already spoken. In effect, he says to himself, "I am waiting for an answer, but God has given it to me." Very often, the response to a believer's petition has been practically received before he presents his request, and he only needs that God should open his eyes for him to see that, before he called, God had answered his supplication. Indeed, brethren and sisters in Christ, in one sense, all your prayers—that is, your prayers that ought to be answered,—are already answered; for, whatsoever there may be that you may rightly ask of God, you really have it, since, in giving us Christ, he has already given us all things. An important part of the duty of faith is to believe that you have what you ask in prayer, and then you shall have it. This is blessed philosophy; may we all learn it! Oftentimes, when we are crying to God, and waiting for an answer to our petition, if we did but look around us, and if we had more acute powers of observation,—if our spiritual faculties were keener and quicker, we should perceive that we already have the very thing for which we are asking. Some of you have, perhaps, been saying, "Oh, that we were indeed the Lord's people, who have their prayers answered even before they offer them!" Well, then, turn to the Book, and you will find that the Lord has there told you that you are his if, indeed, you are believing in his Son, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. God has given you, by that most sure word of testimony, the clearest possible evidence of your personal interest in Christ already. If you are

asking for some further kind assuring word, to soothe your fears to rest, turn to the Bible, for there is in it the very word you need. So, seek it out, for I may truly say of God's revelation in this blessed Book,—

> "What more can he say than to you he hath said,
> You who unto Jesus for refuge have fled?"

This leads me to the practical remark that, possibly, the very thing that you have been praying for so long, you may already have obtained; and God may not intend you to pray any longer about it, but may say to you, as he did to Moses, "'Wherefore criest thou unto me? Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward.' Believe that you have the blessing for which you are asking, and go forward in that belief. The time for praying about it has passed; this is the time for grasping the blessing by faith, and using it to my praise and glory." So it seems to me, in our text, that David had prayed, and then suddenly recollected that he had already received the very thing for which he had asked. So he shakes himself from the dust, and cries, confidently and jubilantly, "God hath spoken in his holiness; I will rejoice, I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth."

I. Three things are clear in the text; and the first is, that GOD'S WORD IS THE FOUNDATION OF FAITH: "God hath spoken in his holiness." That is the solid basis on which faith builds.

To me, this is a very precious truth, even for the very childhood of Christian life: "*God hath spoken.*" He has not merely put before us his works, which are like hieroglyphs, difficult to read at times; but he has actually broken what else had been the eternal silence, and spoken to us in words that even a child can comprehend. Unbelieving men still say, as they did of old, "'Since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.' If there is a God at all, there is a great gulf fixed between him and men; how can we know anything about him?" Ah, sirs! that great gulf will always be between you and your God if you do not believe in the revelation that he has given you in his inspired Word. Until that terrible day comes, when he shall speak in thunder-tones of wrath, and summon his guilty creatures to appear at his judgment bar, you will not hear his voice, except as it speaks to you in his Word.

But "God hath spoken in his holiness;" and we ought to be thankful that we have not to serve a God who is dumb. He spake, in the garden of Eden, when our first parents sinned against him. To the serpent he said, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." It was a message of hope to the world when God spake that great promise concerning his Son. Since then, "at sundry times and in divers manners," God hath spoken unto men by his servants, and "by his Son," of which we have the record in this blessed Book; and, since it is a message of mercy and love to us, we ought at once to rejoice that "God hath spoken." Sinner, you are pleading with God for mercy; and he

might well refuse to answer you even a word; but "God *hath* spoken" already, and the answer to your petition is already recorded in his Word. If, when Adam sinned, he had turned away from our rebellious race, and said, "Henceforward, I will hold no communication with you until that day when, with fire and sword, I punish you for your many transgressions;" we should have had no cause for complaining against him; certainly, we could not have impeached his justice, or found fault with his severity. But "God *hath* spoken;" he hath broken the silence which would have been death to us; and, blessed be his name, he hath divinely spoken to us by him who is THE WORD OF GOD,—by God's great *logos*,—the only voice by which he could fully speak out his whole soul so that men might be able to comprehend him; and it is upon what God hath spoken unto us, by his Son, that we have to place our faith; so that, had he not spoken, we should not have had any foundation for our faith; but this is our joy, that "God hath spoken."

Many of us are, I trust, at least somewhat acquainted with what God hath spoken; though I wish that we were all more perfectly acquainted with his Word, and that our confidence more fully rested upon what the Lord has therein revealed to us.

Why is it that you are able to confide in God's Word? Surely, it is because you know that, *for God to speak, is for him to do as he hath said*. By his Word, he made the heavens and the earth; and it is by his Word that the heavens and the earth continue as they are to this day. When he shall "once more" speak, as Paul says in his Epistle to the Hebrews, then shall he unmake what he made, and cast away the worn-out vesture, for, as the Old Hundredth Psalm reminds us,—

"He can create and he destroy."

God's speaking is very different from man's. Very often, man talks about something that he says he will do, but when he has talked about it, there is an end of the matter so far as he is concerned. Man hath spoken; oh, yes! but you can never be sure that, with the talking tongue will go the working hand. He who is quick to promise is not always so prompt to perform. We have many proverbs which remind us that men set light by one another's promises, and well they may; but we must never set light by the promises of God. "He spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast." So, beloved brother, if there is a promise of God to help you in a time of trouble, or to preserve you in the hour of temptation, or to deliver you out of trial, or to give you grace according to your day, that promise is as good as if it had been already performed, since God's Word shall certainly be followed by the fulfilment of it in due season. I beseech you, then, as you read the promise, to say to yourself, "It is done as God hath said." If any man of means, with whom you do business, gives you his cheque for the amount he owes you, do you not say that he has paid you? Yet he has not handed to you even a penny in cash; no notes or gold and silver coins have passed between you; but you rightly say that he has paid you because his signature on the cheque is as

good as money; and is not God's Word as good as man's? Ay, that it is, and far better! Then, so regard it; oh, for faith to do so at this very moment!

Further, *what God hath spoken shall never be reversed.* "God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent." What he hath spoken in public, he does not reverse in private. His own declaration is, "I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth: I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain." Whatever there may be in the sealed scroll that records God's purposes in predestination, there cannot be anything there to contradict what is written on the open scroll of divine revelation. As to the doctrine of election, which often terrifies seeking souls, it never should do so, since there can be nothing, in the secret counsels of God, contrary to the plain promises of God recorded in his Word. He has not said "Yea" in one place, and "Nay" in another; and if he saith "Yea" to-day, he will not say "Nay" to-morrow. He himself said, long ago, "I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." Once let any message go forth out of his mouth, and it shall stand fast for ever.

Oh, then, what a firm foundation for faith this is! First, "God hath spoken;" and that is as good as if he had already done as he hath said; and, secondly, "God hath spoken," and that which he hath said can never be reversed. If there is a promise in the Bible, made to a penitent sinner, and thou art a penitent sinner, that promise must be kept to thee. If there is a blessing promised to a believing soul, and thou art a believing soul, that blessing is sure to thee. If God hath promised to sustain thee when thou dost cast thy burden upon him, and to bring thee through the furnace, with thy hair unsinged, he will do it, for he never yet has been false to his promise, and he never will be. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but not one jot or tittle of his Word shall ever fail. It stands, as an immutable decree, that Jehovah's will shall be done; and this is Jehovah's will,—that, of all that he hath promised to the sons and daughters of men, not one syllable shall ever fail. Oh, how blessedly faith ought to rest on such a foundation as this!

Our text saith, "God hath spoken *in his holiness.*" Now, it sometimes happens that our greatest difficulty in believing a promise of God lies in his holiness. There is, for instance, a promise of pardon to the soul that believeth in Jesus. We think of stern justice, with her majestic yet severe look. In our heart of hearts we reverence her, and we ask, "How can God be just, and yet the Justifier of the ungodly?" We have, at times, had some idea of the perfect purity of God,—the purity of him in whose sight the heavens are not clean, and who charges his angels with folly. We have trembled, sometimes, as though we were dissolved into nothingness, when we have thought of his spotless purity, and we have said, "Can this holy God really mean to receive such sinners as we are, whose very clothes, as Job says, do abhor us? Can he purpose to bring us to his own right hand in glory that we may be among the courtiers in his heavenly kingdom?" Yes, he does mean to

do even that; yet the thought of his purity makes us wonder how it can be done. Now, the joy of David was that, when God spoke concerning that glorious—

"Stem of Jesse's rod,"—

he spoke it "in his holiness," that is, in his whole-ness, with his whole perfectly pure nature. He knew all that David then was, and all that David would be; yet he saw it to be consistent with his infinite perfections to make, even with such a man, "an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure;" and, beloved brethren, when the Lord entered into covenant with Christ concerning those whom he gave to him to be his portion for ever, and when, in that covenant, he wrote down blessings exceedingly great and precious, and made promises so vast that we cannot at present form any estimate of their full value, he knew quite well what he was doing, and he did it, knowing all about your doubts and fears concerning your sinfulness and his own holiness. And now, without in the least marring his perfect purity, and inflexible justice, "God hath spoken in his holiness" to poor lost sinners, and said that he will save all of them who trust in Jesus Christ, his Son; and he has also "spoken in his holiness" to his poor imperfect children, and said that he will bless them, and that he will not turn away from them to do them good. This is the covenant that he hath made with his people: "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. . . . And ye shall be my people, and I will be your God." All this, which "God hath spoken in his holiness," he will do without obscuring that wondrous attribute, or marring the glory of his adorable perfections.

II. Now, in the second place, let us notice THE JOY OF FAITH: "God hath spoken in his holiness; I will rejoice."

Are any of you heavy of heart just now? If so, I hope you will catch the spirit of David when he uttered these words. You ought to be glad that "God hath spoken in his holiness," and you must be glad if you feel and know that he has spoken to you. "God hath spoken: I will rejoice."

Observe that this joy, which faith has, is *a joy in the very fact that God hath spoken.* Though nothing may yet have been done for us, God hath spoken, and therefore our heart rejoices. Every divine promise, if it be rightly viewed by faith, will make the heart leap for joy. Suppose you do not need that particular promise just now, rejoice all the same, for you will need it by-and-by. If the promise is not made specially to you, yet it is made to somebody; therefore, rejoice that "God hath spoken" so as to meet the needs of somebody else's case. What if the blessing be too high for you to reach at present? Nevertheless, rejoice that there are mercies stored up for future and more advanced stages of your spiritual growth. And suppose the mercy is one that you long ago enjoyed; still be glad that you did enjoy it in years past, and so rejoice that "God hath

spoken." Oh, what hymns of praise there are in this blessed Book, if this be the theme of our song, "God hath spoken"! Then, the very first pages of Genesis ought to make us rejoice, and we will rejoice because we know how he made the worlds. Pass along through every page, and feast your eyes upon every line of every page, and say, all the while, "'God hath spoken in his holiness; I will rejoice.' This shall be the subject of my joy all the day long; and, in the night watches, will I rejoice in his Word."

You perceive, as I have said, that *this joy comes to the believer even before the promise is literally fulfilled to him.* It is the joy of faith. You have not yet had the promise fulfilled to your sight; but, seeing that it is fulfilled to your faith, begin to be glad about it. Praise the Lord for all the good things he has laid up in store for you; take upon your lips the words of that sweet singer who wrote,—

> "And a 'new song' is in my mouth,
> To long-loved music set;—
> '*Glory to thee for all the grace*
> *I have not tasted yet.*'"

When you are ill, bless God for the health you will enjoy when you get well. When you are down-hearted, bless God for the joy that you will have when he shall again lift up the light of his countenance upon you. When you go to the grave of a Christian friend, bless God because you will meet that friend again. Though you cannot yet see the joys that await you inside the gates of pearl, begin to bless the Lord for all that he has prepared for them that love him. Borrow from the eternal future; you may, for there is plenty of it. There is an infinity of joy; therefore, antedate it a little while. Send your messengers across the Jordan to bring you some of the Eshcol clusters. You may do so, for they are yours, and you may have some of them, even now, as foretastes of the bliss that is yet to be revealed. "God hath spoken" to his servants of the great things that he will do for them for many years to come, and throughout eternity. He hath said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." He hath said, "Where I am, there shall also my servant be." Therefore, as "God hath spoken," though as yet my soul abideth in the land of darkness, and drought, and barrenness, yet, because he will fulfil his promise, my heart shall rejoice. David says, in the 11th verse of this Psalm, "O God, who hast cast us off;" yet here, though he is one of the cast-offs, he says, "God hath spoken in his holiness; I will rejoice."

Perhaps I am addressing a minister, whose public labours are apparently unsuccessful. My brother, you have been exceedingly grieved because your people have been like the children of Ephraim, who, "being armed, and carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle." Well now, you must not give way to discouragement, or fall into a dull and sad state of mind, but you must say, "'God hath spoken in his holiness; I will rejoice.' Though I have not, as yet, seen any success attending my efforts, he has said, 'They that sow in tears shall reap in joy,' and I believe I shall do so, for I have often sowed in tears, and sowed the good seed of the kingdom with

many tears and many prayers. Therefore, though I seem, at present, like one of the cast-offs, and little good has come of all that I have done, yet 'God hath spoken in his holiness;' and therein 'I will rejoice.'"

I may be speaking to a brother who is tried in another way. You, dear friend, have not enjoyed the means of grace as you used to do. You blame yourself for the change, and it is right and proper that you should do so. You have not now those happy experiences that you once had; neither do you enjoy such blessed visits from your Lord as you had a year or so ago. You know that the fault lies with you; still, remember that faith is never dependent upon feeling, and our confidence is never to rest upon our inward condition. Otherwise, it rests on the shifting sand; but, if this is the case with you, now is the time for you to exercise faith, and to say, "Though I am, as it were, a cast-off, and the Word of the Lord is not just now solacing my heart, yet 'God hath spoken,' and, sinner as I am, if I be not a saint, I trust to what God has said to believing sinners, and 'I will rejoice,' even though I seem to be only a cast-off."

Once more, notice that David, at the time he wrote this Psalm, had discovered *the vanity of human confidence.* He says, in the 12th verse, "Give us help from trouble: for vain is the help of man." "My best friend has proved to be a traitor; he that ate bread with me, hath lifted up his heel against me. Those, who said that they would never leave me, and who never did leave me while there was anything to be got out of me, are all gone. I said in my haste, 'All men are liars,' but 'God hath spoken in his holiness; I will rejoice.'" It is grand faith that can rejoice in God when friends go as the swallows fly away in the autumn, or drop off as the leaves fade when the summer comes to an end. That was the kind of faith that Habakkuk had when he sang, "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." This is a good crutch for Mr. Ready-to-halt; nay, better than that, surely this will take Ready-to-halt's crutches away, and enable him to run without weariness in the ways of the Lord. Why, brethren, here are the wings of eagles for you, if you only know how to use them: "God hath spoken." What a mighty power your soul will have in prayer if you go to God, and say, "Do as thou hast said." What a sword this is to flash in the face of the foe: "God hath spoken." "*It is written*" is that which makes old Rome to tremble, and her seven hills to quake for fear. Get you a rejoicing grip of this great truth, and the dwarf shall become a giant, the feeblest among us shall be as David, and the house of David shall be like the angel of the Lord.

III. The latter part of the text shows us THE ACTIVITY OF FAITH: "God hath spoken in his holiness; I will rejoice, I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth."

That is, David says, "As God has given me these places to be

parts of my kingdom, I will go, and take possession of them." Some people's so-called faith is of this order,—"God has promised a great blessing; let us go,—and sleep." Their philosophy is,—"God's promise will be sure to be fulfilled; therefore, let us eat and drink, and not trouble at all about the matter. The Lord will have his own people, and he will carry out his own purposes and decrees. They stand fast for ever, so the best thing for us is to do nothing at all. God says that there shall be a harvest; so there is no need for our sowing, and we can lie abed as late as we like." That is the kind of fatalism that many carry even into their Christianity; they make the eternal purposes and blessed promises of God to become reasons for inaction; but it is not so with any sane child of God. He girds up his loins, and says, "God hath spoken in his holiness; I will rejoice, I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth."

Whenever you look into the Word of God, and read what "God hath spoken" to you, *see that you appropriate it.* Suppose that he has promised you comfort, do not rest satisfied without that comfort. Suppose he has promised you joy and peace in believing; never rest till you have that joy and peace. Suppose he has promised you complete sanctification, full deliverance from the power of evil, do not be satisfied till you are delivered from it all. Never say, "Ah, that is a constitutional sin; that is the result of my temperament." No, brother, if the Lord hath promised you the victory over your enemies, be not satisfied till you have planted your foot on their necks, and they are in subjection to you. Some Christian people are living, spiritually, on a penny a week, when their income might be ten thousand a day. You might live like kings, yet you are starving like paupers. Your faith might lay hold on God's exceeding great and precious promises, and so fill her mouth with good things; but, instead of doing so, you are quivering with the palsy of unbelief, and so not grasping what God has put within your reach. There lies Succoth, but you do not mete it out. There lies Shechem, but you do not divide it. Yet they are both of them yours by divine donation. Oh, if our faith did but really grip the promises, and believe in the promise-keeping God, she would never rest till she possessed all the blessings that are really hers! I think that every young Christian should say, when he joins the church, "Now, I do not want to be merely an average Christian. I am nothing, and less than nothing, in myself; but, if there is any blessing to be had from God, I will have it. If I can have a closer walk with God than others have, I will have it. If there is more of Christ's likeness to be had than others possess, I will have it. By God's grace, 'I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth.' If God has given me permission to take anything, why should I not have it?" If you have leave given you to go to Windsor Castle, or Buckingham Palace, as often as you like, and to take whatever you please that is there, and to be treated as a prince, I warrant that you would not need anyone to remind you that you had not been to either place for weeks. If you had such privileges accorded to you, you would be sure to avail yourselves of

them; yet here are the gates of the palace of prayer always open to you, and the doors of communion never shut against you, and Jesus, the great King of kings, not only inviting you to come unto him, but even urging you to abide in him, and never to depart from him,—yet, alas! you do not have fellowship with Christ by the month together. Be no longer like the starveling professors that, now and then, taste a little of the heavenly manna; but, generally, live on the leeks, and the garlic, and the onions of Egypt.

So, if we have faith in God, we ought to take possession of all that is ours, and, further, *we ought to know what we really do possess.* It is delightful to see David here mentioning his various possessions: "I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth. Gilead is mine; Manasseh is mine; Ephraim also is the strength of mine head; Judah is my lawgiver; Moab is my washpot; over Edom will I cast out my shoe; over Philistia will I triumph. Who will bring me into the strong city? who will lead me into Edom?" Perhaps you say, "That is very uninteresting; I do not understand it." No, but David did. He had seen Shechem, and he knew that it was a place worth possessing; and Gilead, and Manasseh, and all the other places interested him, if they do not interest you. And when a child of God looks over his spiritual treasures, and mentions them one by one, he takes an interest even in the very mention of them. The Bible is a dull book to a person who has no part or lot in it. There is no drier reading, in all the world, than the reading of a will in which one has no interest; but there is nothing that would interest you more than listening to the will of your old uncle, in which he had left you a large fortune. You would lean forward, and you would put your hand to your ear lest you should lose any of it, and you would think that you had never heard a more eloquent discourse than that; and when a man gets to know what "God hath spoken," what he hath written for him in this blessed Book, which contains his will, every word is music to him, and he is ready to pick out some of the choicest words, and say, "Regeneration is mine; justification is mine; adoption is mine; sanctification is mine; union to Christ is mine; resurrection is mine; eternal life is mine; yea, all things are mine;" and he would dwell upon each one with a holy unction, at least to his own soul.

Then, if you know what God has given you, *mind that you use it all.* What does David say? "Moab is my washpot; over Edom will I cast out my shoe." As an Oriental, who is weary, throws his sandals to one servant, and then puts his foot out, that another servant may lave it with flowing water, so David says, "I will use Moab and Edom as my servitors." Now, Christian man, if you have true faith, and mean to do real business with God, and for him, say to yourself, "I have this, and that, and the other blessing, and I am going to use them all for his glory. I have been adopted by God; I am his child; so I will plead with him, and will get all I can from my Father to use in his service! I am justified, I have peace with God; so I will go forth, and, in the power of that peace, I will let others see what bliss Christians know. Then I also have sanctification given me in Christ; so I will use that, and seek to be

a true saint, that my life may be a blameless, holy, gracious, Christ-like life. By God's grace, I will not have even one unused privilege."

Once more. David, being in the spirit of full faith in God, now *manifests the spirit of enterprise*, for he says, "God has given me Edom; then I will have it. There is that strong city of Petra, the rock city. It is like an eagle's nest upon a crag; who is the bold man that can capture it, and take the spoil? The fierce sons of Edom, in the defile, will be sure to slay the first men who dare to march into that rocky chasm." "Who will bring me into the strong city?" says he; "who will lead me into Edom?" The spirit of enterprise and of conquest is in his soul; and then he adds, "Wilt not thou, O God, go forth with our hosts?" "Since thou hast spoken as thou hast done, thou wilt surely lead us to victory." In like manner, every man, who has faith in God's Word, ought to be a man of enterprise. I wonder, brothers and sisters, how many of you have any enterprise for God in view just now,—storming some rocky sin, some Petra-like evil in your soul, that seems almost impregnable. You know that your Saviour's name is "Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins." Then, in the strength of that name, go up, and smite your bosom sin, and your constitutional sin; and never rest till you have driven your dagger through every evil that lurks within your soul.

Then think what room for enterprise you have among your fellow-men. "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof;" yet vast multitudes of mankind still sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death. Have any of you enterprise enough to go up against the strong cities that are still in rebellion against the Lord Jesus Christ? Can any of you go, and look after those who walk the streets, and seek to bring them to Christ? That would be conquering Edom itself. Have any of you enterprise enough to go down into the slums and dens of London, to seek out the poorest and the vilest of the people? Have you confidence enough to believe that the Lord Jesus Christ can give you that Petra-like city, that dark spot where thieves congregate, where blasphemy is the current language, and where profanity seems even to pollute the very air? Have you "pluck" enough to undertake such an enterprise as that? Is there manliness enough in any one of you to attempt it? Then, having asked the question, "Who will lead me into Edom?" do not forget to pray, "Wilt not thou, O God? Thou hast spoken; wilt thou not also act, through thy people, so that all flesh may see the salvation of God?" Let each child of God say, "O my Father, I believe that, weak and feeble as I am, my weakness and feebleness need be no hindrance to me if I go to thy service in thy strength! 'Thou hast spoken in thy holiness; I will rejoice;' and, in thy name, I will conquer the foe, and gather the spoil for thee." "Through God," says David, in the 13th verse, "we shall do valiantly: for he it is that shall tread down our enemies." Therefore, if ye believe in God, haste to the spoil of his enemies; quit you like men; be strong! If you really are linked with omnipotence, prove it. Do not talk about it, but let your deeds show that the Lord of hosts is with you, and that the God of Jacob is

your refuge. If, indeed, the Lord's arm be with you, smite as the Lord would smite. If, indeed, he speaks through you, speak as he would speak. Be strong, and very courageous, and press forward; in the name of God, set up your banners; and who knoweth whether even this feeble message of mine, in rousing you to action upon the basis of confidence in the Word of God, may not cast down some stronghold of the enemy, and make the walls of some mighty Jericho to fall flat to the ground? The Lord grant it, for his name's sake! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

PSALMS LVII. 7—11; AND CVIII.

Let me say, before we begin our reading, that the 108th Psalm is made up partly of the 60th and partly of the 57th; yet we are sure that the Holy Spirit is not short of language, so that he needs to repeat himself. It is always a pity to think that any portion of Scripture can be tautology. It cannot be; there is some good reason for every repetition; and you will see that, in the two Psalms, which we are about to read, the latter part of the 57th coincides with the first part of the 108th; and that, in the 57th Psalm, we have prayer and praise, and, in the 108th, we have praise and prayer. It is well that we should see how these two holy exercises can change places,—so that, sometimes, we begin with prayer, and pray ourselves up into praise; and, at other times, we begin with praise, and find in it the strength we need to aid us in prayer.

Psalm lvii. Verse 7. *My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise.*

Let the lions open their cruel mouths, and roar; and let wicked men, "whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword, do their worst against me; let my every footstep be among the nets and pits that they have set and dug to catch me; even in the midst of danger, 'my heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise.'"

8. *Awake up, my glory; awake, psaltery and harp: I myself will awake early.*

"I will awake the dawn;"—so the Hebrew has it;—"I will wake up the morning, and chide it for being so long in opening its eyes to look upon God's works. David did this, notwithstanding all the trials of his surrounding circumstances. He calls on his "glory"—perhaps he means his tongue,—possibly, his poetic faculty,—perchance, his musical skill,—it may be that he means his intellect,—whatever his "glory" is, he calls upon his highest powers to awake to praise his God. Then he takes his psaltery and harp,—strange companions for a man whose soul is among lions; but saints know how to evoke sweetest music even when their enemies are fighting fiercely against them;—and he sings,—

9—11. *I will praise thee, O Lord, among the people: I will sing unto thee among the nations. For thy mercy is great unto the heavens, and thy truth unto the clouds. Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens: let thy glory be above all the earth.*

Have not some of you found God's mercy to be "great unto the heavens"? It even seemed to reach above the heavens; and as for God's truth, you followed it till you could follow it no further, for it had ascended above the clouds. We could scarcely, I think, ever expect to

understand here all the truth which God has pleased to let us hear or read. It reaches "unto the clouds," and there we must leave it for the present. When God ceases to reveal anything, we may cease to enquire concerning it. I saw, in Florence, a picture of "The Sleeping Saviour." He is represented as sleeping in the manger at Bethlehem, and the artist depicts the angels hovering round him, with their fingers on their lips as though they would not wake him from his holy slumbers. So, when God bids truth sleep, do not try to wake it. There is enough revealed for thee to know, and more that thou wilt know by-and-by; so, pry not between the folded leaves; but wait your Lord's appointed time to teach you more of his will.

Psalm cviii. Verses 1—5. *O God, my heart is fixed; I will sing and give praise, even with my glory. Awake, psaltery and harp: I myself will awake early. I will praise thee, O LORD, among the people: and I will sing praises unto thee among the nations. For thy mercy is great above the heavens: and thy truth reacheth unto the clouds. Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens: and thy glory above all the earth;*

Here, we begin with praise,—the very praise with which we finished the other Psalm,—praise in a very joyous, confident spirit, for the praise which precedes prayer has more of the "Jubilate" note in it than ordinary praise has. The prayer in Psalm lvii. 1, which preceded the praise, was earnest, and fervent, and confident, yet it did not reach so high a note as this:—

6—9. *That thy beloved may be delivered: save with thy right hand, and answer me. God hath spoken in his holiness; I will rejoice, I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth. Gilead is mine; Manasseh is mine; Ephraim also is the strength of mine head; Judah is my law-giver; Moab is my washpot; over Edom will I cast out my shoe; over Philistia will I triumph.*

David is claiming the kingdom which God promised to him by the mouth of Samuel the prophet;—looking first upon the kingdom itself, and then upon the surrounding territories, and laying hold upon them all as his own because God had given them to him.

10. *Who will bring me into the strong city? who will lead me into Edom?*

In the spirit of a truly courageous leader, he means to fight with that ancient foe of Israel; and wisely appeals to God to lead his army:—

11—13. *Wilt not thou, O God, who hast cast us off? and wilt not thou, O God, go forth with our hosts? Give us help from trouble: for vain is the help of man. Through God we shall do valiantly: for he it is that shall tread down our enemies.*

The discourse, preceding the above exposition, is No. 2,864 in the regular weekly issues of C. H. Spurgeon's sermons, which commenced in January, 1855, and have continued, uninterruptedly, ever since. It is also the first sermon in the 50th annual volume, and may be obtained, printed in gold, price 3d., as a memento of this unique event in the history of homiletic literature. Messrs. Passmore and Alabaster, Paternoster Buildings, London, will gladly send a complete Textual Index to any applicant.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

FENCING THE TABLE.

A Sermon

PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 7TH, 1904,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, January 2nd, 1876.

"But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup."—1 Cor. xi. 28.

THERE are two symbolical ordinances in the Christian Church, and only two,—Believers' Baptism and the Lord's Supper. These have been so misinterpreted, perverted, and abused, that the wish has sometimes crossed the mind of spiritual persons that they had never been instituted. We do not wonder that there should be a denomination of Christians who have given them up, though we think that, in this matter, they have not acted according to the Word of God. We ourselves retain them, for this reason only, because we believe that our Lord Jesus Christ ordained them; and we desire to observe them exactly as Christ ordained them; and thus only shall we find them instructive and helpful to our souls.

Baptism, the immersion of the believer in water, is the token of his death, burial, and resurrection with Christ. It sets forth the fellowship which he has with his Lord, as the apostle tells us: "Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him;" —not that the plunge into the water confers any grace upon the person who is baptized, but it is the type, the emblem, the instructive symbol of the new birth, which new birth consists in passing, by death and resurrection, into newness of life. You all know that we are only born once. A thing can only have one true beginning. Hence, baptism is never to be repeated. Once done, it is done for ever.

The other ordinance is the Lord's Supper; and, as baptism sets forth, typifies, (mark you, nothing more than typifies,) and is the emblem of the new birth, so the Lord's Supper is the emblem of the spiritual feeding of that new life. Now, though a man is born only once, he eats a great many more times than once, and drinks a great many more times than once. Indeed, to eat and to drink often, are necessary to the maintenance of our life. If we neglected to do so, we should soon find ourselves in an ill case. Hence, the

Supper of the Lord, representing, as it does, the spiritual feeding of the new-born life upon the body and blood of Christ, (and only representing it, mark you,—not really doing it in any carnal sense,) is oftentimes to be repeated. We find that the early Christians very frequently broke bread together; I think they did so almost every day. It is recorded, by some of the early fathers, that the first Christians seldom met together, on any day of the week, without commemorating the death of Christ. Augustine mentions this; and he seems to have taught that, at least once in the week, on that blessed day which celebrates the resurrection of our Lord, Christians should meet for the breaking of bread. I think that, the oftener we meet for this purpose, the better it is for us. The Holy Spirit specifies no particular time; we are not under a law which binds us to this period or to that. Our Lord leaves it very much to our own loving hearts; but the words that Paul quotes, "This do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me," certainly imply that we should often "do this" in remembrance of our dear Lord and Saviour.

A simple feast, even of bread and wine, a feast often celebrated, would be liable to be trifled with and misapplied. Hence, as paradise of old was guarded by cherubim, with a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life, so stands this simple Supper of the Lord guarded with a flaming sword, of which my text is a portion: "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup."

Now, with this thought upon our minds, let us go to the text itself, and observe how we are bidden to examine ourselves before we come to the table of the Lord. We will speak, first, concerning *the necessity for this examination;* next, *the person who is to perform it;* then, *the vital points of the examination;* and, lastly, *the spirit in which we should come to the table after we have examined ourselves.*

I. First, then, THE NECESSITY FOR THIS EXAMINATION.

The sense of that necessity will be very strongly impressed upon us if we remember that *many have profaned the table of the Lord.* Hence it is incumbent upon us to examine ourselves lest we should do the same. Years ago,—our grandfathers recollect it well,—men had to "take the sacrament," as it was called, before they could be made mayors of towns, or hold certain offices in the municipalities; and, in that way, the communion table became a passport to secular office. I tremble as I think how the laws of this land compelled men—though they ought never to have yielded obedience to such laws,—to eat and drink judgment or condemnation to themselves as they profaned this holy ordinance. Others have made it, as I fear that some still make it, a means of obtaining alms; coming to the communion table because those who are members of the church are helped in the time of their poverty, or there is a distribution of alms-money among the needy communicants. Ah, dear friends, however poor you may be, it would be better for you even to starve than to get help in this way if you are not really the Lord's people. If any of you have acted thus, I charge you, before

Almighty God, to do so no more. If we have any suspicions that we have ever done such a thing, we may well examine ourselves concerning that matter, and sincerely repent if we have so sinned against the Lord.

Others come to the communion as a piece of sheer superstition, really believing, poor deluded souls, that, when they take the wafer into their mouths, they actually eat the flesh of Christ. Such a monstrous doctrine as that is only fit for cannibals; it is not a doctrine of Christianity. What a profanation of the ordinance it is to come to it with such a notion as that! If any of us have the slightest idea that, to partake of what is called "the sacrament"—though there is no such name as that for it anywhere in Scripture,—confers grace, let all such thoughts be banished from our minds at once.

It is not a converting ordinance, nor a saving ordinance; it is an establishing ordinance and a comforting ordinance for those who are saved. But it never was intended to save souls, neither is it adapted to that end; and if it be so misrepresented, it is apt rather to be the means of damning than of saving the soul, for he that so eats and drinks may, in very deed, be eating and drinking damnation to himself.

I fear that there are others who come to the communion table out of mere form. I find that it is the custom of certain persons to do this always on Christmas day and on Good Friday, though what particular sanctity there can be about those two days, I am sure I cannot tell. I see little enough of holiness about them, and a great deal of sheer superstition. But let all of us be careful that we never come to the communion simply because it is the first Sabbath in the month, or even because it is the day of our Lord's resurrection, and because, as church-members, we feel that we ought to come there. I mention these things—although I hope, to the most of you, they are unnecessary,—because they are necessary to a certain class of persons who, in one or other of these ways, thoughtlessly profane the table of the Lord.

But, brethren and sisters in Christ, we need to examine ourselves, because it may be that, though free from these evils which I have mentioned, we have come to this solemn feast without due solemnity, without serious thought, without the proper preparation of heart or the right observance of the ordinance. We have come very often to the communion table, yet there has been but little real heart-fellowship with Jesus. There has been bread upon the table, and in our mouths, but we have not discerned the Lord's body. There has been wine there, but we have not looked through the sign to the blood of which it is only the symbol. If it has been so with any of us, we have, to that extent, eaten and drunk unworthily, and I know not how much of deserved chastisement God may have laid upon us on that account. but the apostle's words have often been fulfilled since his day, "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep."

This examination is necessary, next, *because the purpose of this ordinance requires that we should be in a fit condition for its*

observance. What is the object of this ordinance? "This do in remembrance of me," says the Lord Jesus; but you cannot remember what you do not know. Then, how can you remember an unknown Christ? By coming to the communion table, you are supposed to let men see, as they look on at this ordinance, that you believe that Christ lived and died to save sinners. But suppose that you do not believe it,—that you do not, at any rate, in your heart savingly believe it; then, you are not a fit person to proclaim that truth to others by means of this ordinance. The Lord Jesus Christ does not want his enemies to be his remembrancers; he wants his friends to cherish his memory, and to keep the fact of his death prominently and permanently before the eyes of the world. It must be his friends who must do this. Besides, this ordinance is one special means of communion between Christ and his people, but what communion can there be between you and Christ if you are a son of Belial? If you love sin, and continue to live in sin, what possible fellowship can you have with the holy Christ? Will he have communion with a man who even comes to his table drunk,—or who comes from dishonest actions all the week,—or who has been singing a lascivious song, but now turns to join with those who laud and magnify the name of the thrice-holy God? Imagine not that Jesus Christ will welcome such as you are to his table. If you do come, it will be at your most imminent peril. It can do you no good; it must be a curse rather than a blessing to you. So, let us examine ourselves, because those, who come to the table of the Lord, ought to be of such a sort that the purposes and objects, for which the ordinance was instituted, may be realized in them.

But let us specially examine ourselves, *because, if we come not aright, we shall incur very severe penalties,*—the penalties which I have already mentioned to you. Let me again read to you these solemn words: "Wherefore, whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord." And then follows the sure penalty upon true believers who, nevertheless, come in an unfit state to the table. I have read it to you before, but I will read it again: "He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh condemnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep." Put off thy shoes from thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground. Rush not in to the sacred place, but come with that gracious timorousness—nay, rather, with that holy boldness—which becomes a sinner who has been washed in the blood of Jesus Christ, and is robed in his spotless righteousness.

And, dear friends, once more, there is a necessity for us to examine ourselves, *because we must know that there are, among us, some who are, doubtless, partaking of the Lord's Supper unworthily.* We have known, to our great sorrow, of some who have been harbouring an unforgiving spirit, yet who have dared to come to the communion table. When I have really known that this has been the case, I have prevented the wrongdoer from sitting down with us; but, unknown to me, and to other ministers, it must often have

happened that persons have come, professing to be Christians, yet all the while not manifesting the true spirit of Christianity toward some offending brother or sister. You remember how even the loving apostle John writes, "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?"

Then, alas! there are some, who, by coming to the communion, profess to be Christians, yet who, nevertheless, are all the while living in shameful sin which they dare not have discovered? This is one of the greatest sources of sorrow to true ministers of Christ, and it has made us often wring our hands with agony, and weep bitter tears before the Lord, when we have seen trees looking fair and green, but which, inwardly, as Bunyan said, were "so rotten that they were only fit to be tinder for the devil's tinder-box." Their profession was a false one; for, all the while, their moral character was unsound. There was a rottenness about them which no one discovered till, upon some fatal day,—fatal to their own reputation, but good for the church's purification,—they were exposed, and driven out with shame. Judas was found out at last; Ananias and Sapphira were at last found out, and cut off from amongst the people of God, and the unclean and unholy among the early Christians were excommunicated from the assembly of the saints.

Now, brethren and sisters, if, to your own personal knowledge, this has been the case with others, forgive me when I ask,—Is there not at least the possibility that it may also be the case with you? At any rate, you will do well to examine yourselves; and if, after having honestly examined, you can say, "No, that is not the case with me," then bless God that you can truthfully say so. Take no credit to yourselves, but give to God's grace the whole of the praise. Still, do look thoroughly to this matter. "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith." I, as a minister, am bound to examine myself, because there have been eminent preachers of the gospel who, nevertheless, have lived unhallowed lives. No preacher may dare to say, "My office screens me from this test." Deacons and elders of the church, you must examine yourselves, because you have known church-officers who have brought disgrace upon the offices that they have filled. And you, Sunday-school teachers, open-air preachers, tract-distributors, and the like,—and you, members of the church,—however useful you may be, and however highly you may be respected by your fellow-members, I beseech you, nevertheless, shirk not this duty, but let each one examine himself ere he comes to sit down at the table of the Lord.

II. Now, secondly, I am to speak about THE PERSON WHO IS TO PERFORM THIS EXAMINATION: "Let a man examine *himself*."

Let not anyone say, "I was examined by the proper officers of the church, before I was admitted into church-membership, so I do not need any further examination." Now, mark, it is the duty of every church, in receiving members, to judge all applicants by their fruits. "By their fruits shall ye know them," is our Lord's own test. We must have a credible profession of faith, supported by a

life that is consistent therewith, but that is all upon which we can form a judgment. We cannot examine the heart, and we cannot infallibly judge the life. How very often have we been deceived in these matters! If anyone were to suppose that a certificate of church-membership is to excuse him from the duty of personal self-examination, he is grievously mistaken. No, dear friend, you know what your secret thoughts are, and what your private actions are; and therefore it is to yourself that this duty is committed: "Let a man examine *himself*."

"Well, but," someone may say, "my friends—my private friends—are quite satisfied concerning my spiritual condition. I have been talking to my godly mother; I have been conversing with my praying father; I have had sweet fellowship, just lately, with a good old Christian friend; and they all seem perfectly satisfied with me." I am glad they are; but Paul says, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, "Let a man examine *himself*." There is no greater error under heaven than to try to shift the responsibility of our own personal religion on to friends or to so-called "priests." There can be no more gigantic imposture than the supposed sponsorship of infants. It amazes me that anybody can dare to say, on any child's behalf, that it shall renounce the pomps and vanities of this world, and all else that is mentioned in the Church Catechism. But it would be an equally gigantic imposture if we were to establish a sponsorship for grown-up people. Both of them are wicked, and neither of them can be carried out; we cannot guarantee the Christian character of other people, the apostolic rule must remain: "Let a man examine *himself*." Look ye well to the state of your own souls; and, to this end, go to God in prayer, and say, as David did, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

III. Now, thirdly, WHAT ARE THE VITAL POINTS IN THIS EXAMINATION? There are a good many, but I have arranged them under five heads for the sake of brevity, and to help your memories.

First, my dear friends, *examine yourselves concerning your knowledge*. There are some who are too ignorant to come to the table of the Lord. They may have taken their M.A. degree at Oxford or Cambridge, they may even be Doctors of Divinity, and yet be too ignorant to come to the Lord's table. What knowledge is necessary for coming aright to the table? I answer,—Saving knowledge—a living knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, who said, "This do in remembrance of me." You cannot remember a person you never knew; so you must be acquainted with the Lord Jesus Christ if you would observe this ordinance as he instituted it. There is the bread upon the table. Have you ever known what it was to be spiritually hungry? Do you know that Jesus Christ is the only food that can relieve the hunger of your spirit? Have you learned to know him through feeding upon him by faith? Then, you are a fit person to partake of the bread on the communion table, because you are a person who understands what it signifies, you who have been satisfied by feeding upon Christ. There is also the wine-cup

upon the table. Were you ever spiritually thirsty? Did you then see how the Lord Jesus Christ, by his atoning sacrifice, has fully met all the needs of your soul? Have you really partaken of Jesus Christ, and has your heart been refreshed, and revived, and cheered by the application to it of the precious blood of Jesus? If so, you understand the meaning of that communion cup, and you are a fit and proper person to partake of it. But if you have never known this spiritual hunger and thirst,—if you have never realized your own spiritual needs, and if you have not known what it is for Christ to supply those needs, I charge you to keep away from this table until you do know these things. Otherwise, you will be eating and drinking in utter ignorance; and the mere physical acts will be of no service whatsoever to you. May the Lord give you to know him whom to know is life eternal; and when you do know him, then come to his table, for you will not then eat and drink unworthily.

Then, next, *examine yourselves concerning your faith.* Knowledge is all in vain without faith; and the knowledge, of which I have been speaking, is a knowledge that is closely allied with faith. Are you trusting alone in the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ? I have asked myself that question many scores of times, and I do not recollect that I ever had any hesitancy about how to answer it. I know that I am trusting in Jesus. If I am really living,—if there is any truth in my own consciousness,—I am sure that I have trusted my soul, for time and for eternity, wholly to the keeping of that Saviour who lived, and died, and rose again for sinners. Well, that being so, I have a right to come to the communion. Christ wants believers at his table; they are his own children. If you are believing in him, he invites you to come, and you will be welcome if you do come. You will not eat and drink unworthily, dear friend, if you apprehend, by faith, that Christ's flesh is meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed. You will come to the table in the right manner.

In the third place, I want you to *examine yourselves concerning your repentance.* In the emblems upon the communion table, I can see something of what it cost your Lord to redeem you from sin, and death, and hell. The bread, representing the flesh of Jesus, is separate from the wine, which represents his blood, and the separation of the blood from the flesh indicates death,—a bleeding away of life in the most acute anguish. It cost your Lord untold agony to redeem you from going down into the pit, so can you ever imagine that any man is a fit person to participate in the emblems which set forth that agony if he has never felt, in his own soul, any agony on account of sin? What right has an impenitent person to come where the death of Christ, on account of sin, is specially set forth? A heart that has never been broken, because of sin,—shall it come and remember the broken body and broken heart of Jesus? A heart of stone, that has never been melted,—shall it come and remember his precious flesh that was melted in the agonies of Calvary? If your eyes have wept no tears of repentance, how can you properly remember him whose veins wept blood to redeem his

people from their sins? It is a contrite heart and a broken spirit that Christ wants here. Only with such persons will God deign to dwell, and only with such will Christ commune, either at his table or anywhere else. See to it, then, that you have genuine repentance.

The next vital point for self-examination is love. *Examine yourselves concerning your love.* I think, brethren, that none of us can worthily eat of this bread, and drink of this cup, unless we truly love our Lord; so I venture to put the question to each one of you here. I know not your names, but the name that is used by our Lord Jesus will do for you. He says, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" You answer, "Yes," do you? Then I will put the question again: "Simon, son of Jonas, Jesus says to thee, 'Lovest thou me?'" And yet a third time I may put it: "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" 'Tis Jesus with the pierced hand, and with the pierced feet, who speaks, and he says, "Lovest thou me?" This is the test of whether you may come to his table, or not. Can you answer, "'Yea, Lord; thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee.' Sometimes, my friends hardly know it, for I am not always as consistent as I should be. Sometimes, Lord, I have even to question it myself, but THOU knowest that, deep down in my heart, notwithstanding all my coldness and forgetfulness, all my wanderings, and all my faults, thou knowest that I do love thee." Come along, brother; come along, sister; you will not eat and drink unworthily if this is true concerning your love to your Lord.

There is one other matter which is vital, and that concerns obedience. *Examine yourselves concerning your obedience;* for, unless a man obeys the commands of Christ, he does not prove that he really loves Christ. If we truly love him, we shall keep his commandments. If Paul had said that no one had a right to come to the communion unless he was perfect, I certainly could not come, and I feel sure that there is no one in the whole world who would have the right to come. Perfect? Ah, perfect weakness; and if anybody says he is perfect in any other sense than that, he must be possessed of perfect folly. But the obedience that we must have is of this sort. Dost thou desire to be perfectly obedient to thy Lord? Dost thou, in thy heart, desire to be rid of every sin, and to forsake every false way? Is there any sin that thou wouldst fain harbour and indulge? Then, thou art not truly obedient; but canst thou, on the other hand, say, "Lord, I would be purged from every evil of every kind, and I desire to obey thee in all things. No matter how it may grate upon my feelings, or how contrary it may be to my wishes, where thou biddest me, I will go, and what thou commandest me, I will do,—thy grace helping me"? Is that what you say? Then, you may come to the communion, for Jesus himself welcomes you. But if you will not give up sin, if you have even one pet sin that you still determine to keep, you are a traitor to Christ, and you have no more right to come to his table than Judas Iscariot had.

IV. Now, in closing, I want to speak a few words concerning THE SPIRIT IN WHICH, AFTER THIS SELF-EXAMINATION, WE OUGHT TO COME TO THE COMMUNION.

Ought we not to come, dear friends, each one of us, *in the spirit of holy wonder?* This is the Lord's table, and I am coming, with the Lord's redeemed people, to eat and drink at it; what a wonder that *I* am here! I never come to the communion without being astonished at the amazing grace of God to me, and especially as I think of this great church which God has been graciously pleased to gather in this place. How much I owe to him! How constantly am I struck with the marvels of his mercy to me! And each one of you, my fellow-believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, has some peculiar reason for feeling the same kind of wonder in your own case.

Next, we ought to come to the communion *with a sense of self-abasement.* Brethren, we ought to think little of ourselves everywhere; but when we come to the table of our Lord, we ought to shrink to nothing,—yea, to less than nothing. In the wilderness, man did eat angels' food, but angels never ate such food as this; yet we are permitted to come and partake of it. So, let us sink, and sink, and sink, and sink, and sink, and sink, and sink, till we are lost in wonder, love, and praise that we should ever be permitted to come to this sacred feast.

Let us come, at the same time, *in a spirit of strong desire.* I believe that, in a sermon, people always get good when they come desiring to get it. A hungry congregation will be sure to be fed; and if we come to the communion table feeling, "My Lord and Master, I desire to meet with thee. The bread alone will not satisfy me; I want to feed spiritually upon thy flesh. The wine will not quench my soul's thirst; I want spiritually to receive thy blood into my inmost soul. I desire, with all passionateness of holy ardour, to put my finger into the print of the nails, and to thrust my hand into thy side;"—if you come to the communion in this spirit, longing for Christ, you shall have him. Open your mouths and pant for him, and the living waters shall quench your soul's thirst.

Then come to the table *with a believing hope.* Perhaps you have not seen your Master's face lately, you have been sorrowfully walking in darkness. Come to the communion hoping that he will look through the lattice, and reveal himself to you. Do you not know that the two ordinances are windows of agate and of carbuncle to the opened eyes of his people? Mayhap, your loving Lord will look again through one of those windows while you are sitting at his table. So, come expecting him; come with your heart wide open to receive its rightful Lord and Master, and with your eyes of love looking up to him; and, surely, if the eyes of your love look up to him, the eyes of his love will look down upon you. If you come to his table, singing, "My Beloved is mine, and I am his; he feedeth among the lilies;"—if you come passionately desiring to enjoy his company;—then you may also come with the full confidence that his company will be given to you.

I have only one thing more to say. Come to the communion table resolved that if, in the ordinance, you do not find your Lord;—if, in the breaking of bread, he is not manifested to you; and if, in the pouring forth of the wine, you get no taste of his love;—*you will still trust in him.* Do not depend on outward signs and visible

evidences, but say, "'Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him;' and if his table should yield me no spiritual meat, I will still cleave to my Master; and if he will only let me be as a dog beneath his table, I will eat the crumbs that fall there, and so shall I live, for in every crumb of his mercy there is life everlasting."

As for you, who perhaps have never thought upon this subject, I have to say just this to you, and then I have done. Remember that religion does not begin with ordinances. While I have been speaking to professing Christians concerning the communion, I hope that none of you have been thinking of it as a saving ordinance. You, as sinners, have to exercise faith in Christ before you have anything to do with believers' baptism; you have to come to Christ himself before you are qualified to come to the Lord's table. As soon as you have, by faith, received Jesus Christ himself as your Saviour, the tokens and emblems of his death will become instructive to you; but until Jesus Christ is wholly yours, hands off all these holy things! For, as uncircumcised Philistines would have had no right to be at the Paschal supper, so have those, who are not renewed in heart with that circumcision that is made without hands, no right to come to the feast of Christian love which is reserved for the followers of the Crucified. Come ye to Jesus, to Jesus only, and put your trust in him. God grant that you may do so, for Christ's sake! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

MATTHEW XXVI. 17—30; AND 1 CORINTHIANS XI. 18—34.

Matthew xxvi. Verses 17—26. *Now the first day of the feast of unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the passover? And he said, Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Master saith, My time is at hand; I will keep the passover at thy house with my disciples. And the disciples did as Jesus had appointed them; and they made ready the passover. Now when the even was come, he sat down with the twelve. And as they did eat, he said, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me. And they were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto him, Lord, is it I? And he answered and said, He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me. The Son of man goeth as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born. Then Judas, which betrayed him, answered and said, Master, is it I? He said unto him, Thou hast said. And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it,*

So the Jewish Passover melted away into the Lord's Supper. Indeed, so gently did the one dissolve into the other that we scarcely know whether this incident, relating to Judas Iscariot, occurred during the Passover or the Supper. According to one account, it would seem to be one; and according to another account, the other; but, indeed, the one ordinance was almost imperceptibly merged into the other.

I want you carefully to notice, as we read this narrative through, whether you can see here any trace of an altar. Look with both your eyes, and see whether you can find any trace of a priest offering a sacrifice. Watch diligently to see whether you can perceive anything about kneeling down, or about the elevation or the adoration of "the host." Why, even

the Romish church knows better than to believe in what it practises. Most of you have seen copies of the famous painting by Leonardo da Vinci, himself a Catholic of the old school. How does he picture those who were at the institution of the Lord's Supper? Why, they are all sitting around a table, with the Lord Jesus in their midst. I wonder that they exhibit, and still allow to be in their churches, a picture like that, which, painted by one of their own artists, most effectually condemns their base idolatry, in which a wafer-god is lifted up, to be adored by men, who must be besotted indeed before they can prostitute their intellects so grossly as to commit such an act of sin. What a rebuke to that idolatry is conveyed by this simple statement: "As they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it,"—

26. *And brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body.*

The Romanists do not even break the bread. They have a wafer so as to avoid anything like an imitation of the example set by our blessed Lord and Master. He took a piece of the bread which was provided for the paschal feast,—the ordinary unleavened bread, and he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, and said to them, "Take, eat; this is my body." Not, of course, his literal body, which was there at the table; but this was the emblem of his body about to be broken on the cross on the behalf of all his people.

27. *And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it;*

"Every one of you, take your own personal share." This also the Papists have perverted by denying the cup to the laity.

28—30. *For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom. And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.*

It was a social feast, somewhat funereal, and tinctured with sadness, for Jesus was about to go from them, to die; still, it was a joyous celebration, closing with a hymn. At the paschal feast, the Jews always sang Psalms 113 to 118. Probably our Lord sang all these through. At any rate, Christ and his apostles sang a hymn; and I always like to think of him as leading the little company,—going to his death with a song upon his lips, his voice full of melody, and made more sweet than ever by the near approach of Gethsemane and Calvary. I would like always to sing, whenever we come to the communion table, after the fashion in which they sang that night: "When they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives."

Now let us read what the apostle Paul writes concerning the Lord's Supper.

1 Corinthians xi. Verses 18—22. *For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it. For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you. When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper. For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken. What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise you not.*

These Corinthians fell into a great many errors. Everybody was a speaker, and said whatever he pleased; and they had no proper order or

rule. Among other evils, when they met together to observe the Lord's Supper, they brought their own food with them, thinking that eating thus together was keeping the sacred feast. So the richer ones feasted to the full, and the poor went almost without anything. "One is hungry, and another is drunken," says the apostle, and he tells them that this was not the right way of observing the Lord's Supper. Yet it is evident that the idea which was in their mind was that of feasting together. They had exaggerated it, and carried it to a grievous excess; but that was the idea they had concerning it. Certainly, there was no altar, or priest, or anything of the sort. Now the apostle tells them how the ordinance should be observed.

23—25. *For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.*

How wonderfully simple it all is! There is nothing here of the paraphernalia of a "sacrament." It is a simple memorial festival, that is all.

26, 27. *For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come. Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.*

He shall be guilty with respect to that body,—not with respect to that bread, against which he cannot sin,—but with respect to that body which is represented by the bread, and with respect to that blood which is represented by the cup. See with what holy solemnity this humble feast is fenced and invested. There is a divinity which doth hedge the simple ordinance of Christ lest men should trifle with it to their eternal ruin.

28, 29. *But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.*

"Judgment" or "condemnation" is the word in the original, not "damnation." That is not a fair translation, neither does it express the truth. He that eateth and drinketh unworthily condemns himself in so doing, he comes under judgment for that act. This is the kind of judgment that falls upon Christians if they come unworthily to the Lord's table:—

30—32. *For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.*

Believers, who are rendered sick, or who even die, because of their offence against the Lord's ordinance, are not therefore condemned to hell. Far from it; it is that they may not be so condemned that God visits them. "When we" the people of God—"are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world."

33, 34. *Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another. And if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that ye come not together unto condemnation. And the rest will I set in order when I come.*

By due attention to the apostle's injunctions, they would be able rightly to observe the ordinance; and we also may learn, from what Paul wrote, how we may worthily come to the table of our Lord.

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GOOD NEWS.

A Sermon

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C. H. SPURGEON,

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On Thursday Evening, January 6th, 1876.

"As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country."—Proverbs xxv. 25.

THIS is a text for summertime rather than for a winter's evening. It is only on one of our hottest summer days that we could fully appreciate the illustration here employed; we need to be parched with thirst to be able to feel the value of cold waters to quench our thirst. At the same time, I think that we can, without any very great stretch of imagination, put ourselves into the position of some to whom cold waters have been almost like life from the dead. Look at Hagar, in the wilderness with her child, whom she has cast under one of the shrubs, that she may not see him die. The water in the bottle is spent, and she longs for a cooling draught that might save the young lad's life. Then the Lord opened her eyes, so that she saw a well of water in the desert, and as she filled her bottle from it she understood what cold waters are to a thirsty soul. Think also of the whole nation of Israel in the wilderness crying out in agony because there was no water for them to drink. Then they began to murmur against the Lord, and against Moses; but how joyful they were when the smitten rock poured forth its cooling stream, and they rushed to it, and drank to the full. If you want another personal example of the blessing of cold water to a thirsty soul, think of Samson. Heaps upon heaps, with the jawbone of an ass he has slain a thousand men; but the dust of the conflict, and the heat, and the exhaustion had caused such an intense thirst to come upon him that he is ready to die. Then he lifts up his voice to the Lord; and the same God, who had made the jawbone to be so mighty a weapon against the Philistines, opens for him a spring of water in that very jawbone, and he drinks, and is refreshed, and magnifies the name of the Lord. So, you see, there are occasions when cold waters are inexpressibly precious to thirsty souls; and Solomon, who seems to have known something of their

value, says that good news from a far country is equally pleasant, and refreshing, and reviving.

This proverb is true in its most literal interpretation. When we are in a far country, separate from those we love, there is no greater pleasure than that of receiving letters from them, with tidings of their welfare. Even the little details about household affairs—the minor events which we should scarcely have noticed if we had been there—become exceedingly interesting to us; and the longer we have been away from home, the more dear everything becomes to us when we hear of it in the far country where, for a while, our lot has been cast. I suppose that merchants, who have costly ventures in distant parts, also long for good news from the far country which is still their home wherever they may be. Solomon had sent his ships to various foreign countries, and when the news came from Joppa that the vessels were in sight which had come back from India, or from the Pillars of Hercules, bringing all manner of precious things, the merchant prince was highly pleased, and felt that "as cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country." And this, which is a literal fact, may become an illustration of spiritual truth; and I am going to use it in that way as God, the Holy Spirit, may guide me.

First, *good news from God for sinners* is like cold waters to a thirsty soul. Secondly, *good news from heaven for saints* is like cold waters to a thirsty soul. And, thirdly, *good news in heaven from earth*—the good news which reaches that far country, every now and then,—is to angels and glorified saints as cold waters to a thirsty soul.

I. First, then, (and may God bless this first head very richly!) GOOD NEWS FROM GOD FOR SINNERS is like cold water to the thirsty.

Sin has led the sinner into a far country. That part of the description of the prodigal son, who gathered all together, and went into a far country, aptly describes the condition of the whole human race. Man, before the Fall, was near to God, he communed with him. But when Adam and Eve "heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day," after they had disobeyed him, they "hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden." Practically, by his sin, Adam set out on a long journey away from his happy home; and, soon, he was so far off that, when God came where he had formerly communed with him, he had to cry to him, "Adam, where art thou?" In like manner, we are alienated from God by wicked works, far off from him in character, for he is light, and we are darkness; he is truth, and we are falsehood; he is love, and we are just the opposite. We are also far off from God in our aims and objects, for we aim, not at the good of others, nor at his glory, but we seek earthly things. We are, by nature, far off from God in the whole bent and current of our life, which no longer runs in a parallel line with the life of God as first imparted to man, but runs rather according to the fashion of the life of Satan, so that we yield ourselves up to the evil influence of that foul spirit who worketh in the children of disobedience.

When a sinner is awakened by the Holy Spirit, he becomes conscious of this distance, and he feels, in a measure, like the lost spirits in hell who realize that there is a great gulf fixed between them and God. At first, the convicted sinner fancies that that gulf can never be passed; and the longer he looks into its awful depths,—the longer his eyes try to gaze across it to the other side,—the more he discovers that he is far off from his God, and that there is a vast, yawning chasm between him and his Maker. If any of you, dear friends, are conscious of being thus at a distance from God, I have come as a messenger from him bringing to you his words of mercy and grace, which should be to you as good news from a far country.

And the first piece of good news that I have to give you is, that *God has not forgotten you.* You are a lost sheep, and you have almost forgotten your Shepherd; perhaps, you have altogether forgotten him; but your Shepherd has been counting over the number of his sheep, and he finds that there is one missing, for there are only ninety and nine where there should be a hundred, and he is deeply concerned about the one that has gone astray.

God has not only remembered that there is such a person as you, but *he remembers you with pity.* It is wonderful to notice how he speaks. Sometimes, he cries, "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim?" Like as a father pitieth his children, so is it with our God, he pities those who wander away from him. "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live." God takes no delight in your sin, and no delight in the shame and sorrow which your sin will bring upon you unless you turn from it; but he will take delight in you if you return to him. He still cries to you, "Return ye now every one from his evil way;" and he still remembers you in pity and compassion. Notwithstanding your forgetfulness of him, and your wilful rebellion against him, he doth remember you still; for God is love, and there is love in his heart even towards sinners who are dead in trespasses and sins. That, surely, is good news to you; and if God thus thinks of you in pity, should not you think of God with deep, heartfelt penitence and contrition?

But there is even better news from God for you than this, namely, that *he has prepared the way by which you may come back to him.* Do you ask, "How can that be, for there is a wall of partition between us? How can I ever get to God? Surely, the justice of God, on account of my sin, raises an impassable barrier between us. That justice stands like the cherubim with a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life, lest, haply, I should attempt to return to my God." That is quite true, yet listen to this, poor, guilty sinner. God must be just, that is certain; and, being just, he must punish thy sin. But hast thou not heard that he has given his only-begotten Son that he might stand in the sinner's stead, and bear the punishment that was due on account of the sinner's guilt? That cherub's flaming sword has been quenched

in Jesu's precious blood. That middle wall of partition Christ has broken down, even as the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom. Oh, what a mighty rent was that! Not a little slit, part of the way down; but from the top to the bottom. So has Jesus Christ demolished the barrier which stood between a justly angry God and a guilty but repenting sinner, and now there is a way of approach, for the very worst of men and women, right up to the throne of the Most High. By the blood of Jesus, once shed for many, for the remission of sins, the guiltiest foot of man may come. Ay, by that blood-besprinkled way, the most condemned sinner may come without fear of being repulsed. The chasm has been filled, the gulf bridged over, and if thou truly believest in Jesus Christ, thou mayest, in his name, and for his sake, come back to thy Heavenly Father. That wise resolve within thy heart, which says, "I will arise and go to my Father," should be at once carried into effect, for thy Father hath prepared the way by which thou mayest come back to him; and, to encourage thee, he has sprinkled it with the blood of his dear Son,—the surest sign and token of his love to sinners that even God himself could give. Here, then, is good news from a far country. Your Father thinks of you, poor prodigal; and he has paved the way for you to come back to his own house and heart.

Is there any more good news for you? Ay, that there is, far more than I can tell you. This is another piece of it, *God has sent you his Word, and sent you his servants, to invite you to come back to him.* It is very gracious for God to prepare the way; but it is even more gracious for him to invite you to make use of that way. There are, sometimes, cases of necessity when a man thrusts himself upon the notice of another, and seeks his aid in some great emergency. It is a dark and stormy night, and the wanderer, who has lost his way, knocks at the first door he sees, and asks for shelter. But that is not your case. You also are a wanderer, and you need shelter, but mercy's door stands wide open, and God has sent his messengers to invite you to come in. If the door had been closed, it would have been a wise action, on your part, to knock, and ask for admission, or even to cause the kingdom of heaven to suffer violence, and to take the blessing by force. But that is not necessary. Think, then, of the goodness of God, who invites, entreats, exhorts, and persuades sinners to come unto him. Nay, more, there is a text,—a blessed text, I think,—which says, "Compel them to come in." The great King bids his servants to seize them by the mighty force of love, and to draw them in with tears and entreaties again and again repeated, until they yield. "Compel them to come in," says he, "that my house may be filled." This is good news indeed. Such gracious invitations as these make up still more good news: "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: for I have redeemed thee." "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him

return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." "All manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." Is not this good news for poor sinners? O my Master, bless thou thine own words of grace and mercy to all who hear or read them, and make them to be like cold waters to a thirsty soul!

There is still more good news beyond all this, and I will tell you some of it. It is good news that *many have already returned to their Father, and have been welcomed.* Some of these are your own friends and relatives,—your brother, your sister, your father, your mother. This good news does not relate to anything which is merely a matter of experiment. The experiment has been made so often—the blessed experiment of proving whether God will receive repenting sinners or no,—that it is a matter of certainty now. Why, you even know one, who used to be your companion in every kind of folly and sin,—and he has sought and found the Saviour. Did he not tell you so, the other day? And there was one, who seemed to be even worse than you,—at least, he went further in open sin than you have ever done; yet he sought the Lord, and he was not rejected. Now, when I see so many come to Christ, and find that he never casts out one of them, what ought I to infer from that? Why, that he will not cast me out if I come to him. If from my Master's door I saw a stream of sinners coming back, with sad countenances, and all shaking their heads, and saying, "We have been denied admittance, we were too guilty to go in;" or, "We were not fit;" or, "We were not sensitive enough;" or something of that kind, then, methinks, I should not dare to go; but if the footprints of sinners all run towards Christ, and never is there a single footprint of a penitent sinner turned back by him;—if I see him drawing men unto himself, according to his word, "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me;"—and if I never see him repelling or repulsing one sinner, however black or crimson he may be, I may well say, "Come, my poor guilty soul, why shouldst not thou have acceptance too?" At any rate,—

"I'll to the gracious King approach,
Whose sceptre pardon gives;
Perhaps he may command my touch,
And then the suppliant lives.

"I can but perish if I go,
I am resolved to try;
For if I stay away, I know
I must for ever die.

"And if I die with mercy sought,
When I the King have tried,
This were to die (delightful thought!)
As sinner never died;"—

for no sinner ever did seek Jesus Christ by faith in vain. That, surely, is good news from a far country.

And, once again, we have to bring this good news,—that the Lord has not only made a way for his poor wandering children to come back to him, but *he has provided all the means needed to bring them back.* You recollect that, when Joseph sent for his father Jacob to come to him in Egypt, Jacob could not believe that Joseph was still alive; the news, that he was, under Pharaoh, ruler over all Egypt, seemed too good to be true; but when he saw the waggons which Joseph had sent, then his spirit revived. "Waggons" is the word in our translation, but I expect that Joseph also sent some of the best chariots that Egypt could produce to carry poor old Jacob and all his family down into Egypt; and I do not wonder that the spirit of the patriarch revived when he saw those waggons or chariots. There is many a poor sinner who says, "Yes, I know that there is a way of salvation; but, then, my feet are lame, so how can I run along that way? I know that there is saving truth in the Bible, and blessed be God for that; but how shall I ever learn that truth? I know that Christ is himself the Truth, but how can that Truth be mine? I know that there is eternal life, and that Christ is the Life, as well as the Truth and the Way, but I am spiritually dead, can I ever have that life?" Yes, you can, for our Lord Jesus Christ is not merely the Way, but he is also the power by which we run in that way. He is not only the Truth, but he gives us the illuminating Spirit to lead us into the Truth; and he is not only the Life, but he puts that Life into us, and sustains and perfects it. You have nothing to do, sinner, but to give yourself up to the leading, guiding, directing, assisting, quickening of the blessed Spirit of God. It is true that you must believe, but he will give you the grace of faith. It is true that you must repent, but it is also true that he works repentance in us. There must and there will be a change of life in all true converts, but it is the Holy Spirit who converts you and turns you completely round. There must be sanctification in genuine believers, but it is the Holy Spirit who sanctifies you. There is nothing asked of you, in the gospel, but what the gospel itself gives you. Those things which, in one part of Scripture, are put as precepts, are, in other parts of Scripture, among the promises. What the Lord bids the sinner do, he enables the sinner to do, just as, when Jesus said to the man that was paralyzed, "Take up thy bed, and walk," with the command he gave the power to obey it; and when he said to another man, "Stretch out thy hand, withered though it be," the miraculous power, that gave the nerves and muscles force again, went with the mandate from the lips of Jesus. In like manner, trust thou the Lord to give thee the power to lay hold on the gospel The very eye, with which to look at the brazen serpent, is his gift; and that gift he is prepared to bestow upon all who come to him for it. Is not this good news from a far country?

And this, too, is good news,—that *thou mayest come to Christ at once.* If, at this moment, thou art enabled to trust the Lord Jesus, he is thine. The way home looks very far, but the good news I

have to bring you is that you can be there in a moment. That is to say, far off as thou art from God, if thou believest in Jesus, thou art brought to God that very instant. As soon as the Holy Spirit enables thee to trust in Jesus, thou art brought near to God at once. What said our Saviour to the dying thief? "This day shalt thou be with me in paradise." You perhaps will not have an immediate entrance into the paradise above, but may live a little longer here; but, as soon as thou dost believe in Jesus, thou shalt be reconciled to God by the death of his Son; thou shalt have instantaneous forgiveness, and, at the same time, it shall be as permanent as it is instantaneous, and as complete as it is immediate. This is the good news which comes to you by the gospel.

And what thou hast to do with it is this, believe the Father's word, and trust thyself wholly to what Christ has done for sinners. May the Divine Spirit take thee off from all other ways of salvation, and bring thee to trust to this alone, and make thee abhor and loathe, even to detestation, anything like confidence in thy prayers, or thy tears, thy doings, thy sufferings, thy preparings, thy repentings, or anything else; for it is none but Jesus who can bring a sinner near to God. All that you spin, you will have to unravel; all that you build, will have to come down; all that you can bring to God, you will have to take back again. You must come to him empty-handed, with nothing of your own, and simply rest where God himself doth rest,—in the blessed person and the finished work of the Lord Jesus who is all in all.

Now, if thou art spiritually thirsty, this good news will be to thee as a draught of cold water; but if thou art not thirsty, thou wilt not partake of it. It is little use to praise cold water to a man who is already drunk with the world's intoxicating draughts, or to those who have no thirst, and who will despise it. If there is anyone here who does not feel that he is a sinner, or who thinks that he has no great guilt, and who has no true sorrow of heart on account of his sin,—I might as well walk into St. Paul's Cathedral, and talk to the statues there, or into Westminster Abbey, and preach to the dust beneath my feet, as preach to you. Cold waters are for the thirsty; and the good news of mercy and salvation is for the guilty. Oh, that the Holy Spirit would make you feel your deep need, and give you intense spiritual thirst; for, then, Jesus Christ and the good news from the far country would be precious to you!

II. Now I turn to the second part of our subject, which is, GOOD NEWS FROM HEAVEN FOR SAINTS. That also is as cold waters to a thirsty soul.

Does someone ask, "Is there any news from heaven?" Yes, there is; and that shall be my first remark in this part of my theme,—that *news does still come from heaven.* There is an invisible telegraph between us and the glory-land; we are not cut off from communication with those who are there. Jacob dreamed of a ladder reaching to heaven, but it was not merely a dream. Never was there anything more real than that vision of the night, for there is a blessed means of communication between this far-off land and

the goodly land beyond the river. Our prayers and sighs and tears, our praises and thanksgivings, get there all right; they are not lost *en route*. They reach the great heart of God, and messages come down to us from him in response to them. How do they come? Well, they come by the Holy Spirit sealing home to the soul the promises of the Word. Do you know, experimentally, what I mean by that? "Ah!" says someone, "do I not?" Every now and then, some blessed portion of Scripture seems as if it were set on fire, and, as you read it, it blazes out before your eyes, just as, sometimes, we see the lamps that are being got ready for an illumination. There is some grand device; and, before it is lit up, it is little more than an array of pipes; but how different it looks after they have lit it all! So, there is many a text of Scripture which is like that design; you can see something of what it means, but you should see it when it is lit up. How very different it is then! You sometimes get a promise from the Word whispered into your ear, and it is just as new to you as if it had never been written down eighteen hundred or three or four thousand years ago. It is as fresh to you as if the eternal pen had written it to-day, and written it for you alone. Some of us—I hope, many of us—know how the Spirit of God takes of the things of Christ, and reveals them unto us,—leads us into the very heart and soul of the precious blessings of the covenant of grace. This is as good news from a far country, and is as cold waters to a thirsty soul.

And often, too, *the Lord Jesus Christ sends us news concerning the fellowship which he intends us to enjoy with him.* Still do godly men walk with God as Enoch did. Do not imagine that God has gone away, and that no longer may we speak to him as a man speaketh with his friend. No, for "truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." Still does Jesus lay bare his heart to his beloved. Still may we say with the spouse, and have the prayer answered, "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth: for thy love is better than wine." There are still sweet intercourses and blessed love passages between Christ and his chosen, of which the world knows not; but "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will show them his covenant." Yes, there is good news from a far country for the saints of God.

And, dear friends, *it should be our earnest aim to keep unbroken our intercourse with heaven*, for it is the most refreshing thing beneath the sun. This world is like an arid desert where there is no water except as we maintain our intercourse with Christ. So long as I can say that the Lord is mine, all things here below are of small account; but if I once get a doubt about that matter, and if I cease to walk with God, then what is there here below that can content my immortal spirit? Without Christ, this world is to us as thorns without the roses, and as bitters without the sweets of life. But thou, O Lord, makest earth to be a heaven to thy saints even when they lie in dungeons, when thy presence cheers them. But were they translated to the palaces of kings, and thereby lost thy blessed company, those palaces would be worse than prison-houses to them. It is most important that you, who

are obliged to mingle with the world, should maintain your intercourse with Christ; for that is the only way to keep yourself clear from its corruptions. And you, who have much to do in the church, must keep up your intercourse with Christ; for that is the only way of preserving your service from becoming mechanical, and of preventing you from doing good works as a mere matter of routine. You, too, who have much to suffer, or even much to enjoy, must keep up this holy intercourse, or else your soul will soon be like a thirsty land where there is no water.

It may be that I am addressing some, *who have not had much news lately from the far country of heaven.* You are going there, one day, and—

> "There your best friends, your kindred, dwell;
> There God your Saviour reigns;—

but you have had no news from there lately. If it is so with you, I hope you feel as some of us did, a little while ago, when we were in the South of France. "No letters?" we asked, as the time came for our usual post. When the next day came, and there were still no letters, we enquired, "What is the matter?" and they said, "There is deep snow on the railway, the trains cannot travel, so the mails cannot be brought on." Another day passed, and as the snow was not gone, we had no letters. When the letters did come, they were very sweet, and all the sweeter because we had had to wait for them. And there were more of them than usual, for those that had been delayed came tumbling in two or three at a time. I hope it may be so with you and your good news from heaven. If there have been any snow-drifts between your soul and Christ,—and that does happen sometimes in this cold world;—if there is, between you and the Saviour, a chilly air, and a frozen mass of unbelief, so that the trains cannot travel to and fro;—oh, cry mightily to the Lord to melt these snows, and clear them away; and, I warrant you, if you do so, when you get communication restored, and fellowship renewed, it will be exceedingly sweet. I hope you will often feel that you cannot have too much of it, and seek to have more and more. Say, as the spouse did in the Song, "It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found him whom my soul loveth: I held him, and would not let him go." Let this dark season of interrupted fellowship, into which you have passed, only make you the more desperately in earnest to get out of it, so that, when that fellowship is restored, you may be able to say, "I held him, and would not let him go." Get such a firm grip of him again, such a grip as you had when first you knew him,—when the love of your espousals was upon you,—when you were newly married to the blessed Bridegroom, and say again, "I held him, and would not let him go." God grant to you that there may be no more lukewarmness, no more of being neither cold nor hot; and may the cold atmosphere, through which you have passed in his absence, make your heart grow all the warmer towards him now that you have him again! May you cling to him now with an intensity of affection that you have never reached before!

What is this good news of which I have been speaking? Well, dear friends, I think that this good news may be summed up thus. God is working in providence, and making all things work together for your good if you belong to him. Your heart is heavy just now, and your harp is hanging on the willows. Yet God is permitting that to happen for your good. The bitter drugs you have to take are nauseous to you, but they are to work together with other things for your good; wherefore, be of good cheer.

The next piece of good news is that Jesus is pleading for you. Remember how he said to Peter, "Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." Jesus has thy name upon his breastplate,—yea, graven on the palms of his hands. You are not forgotten of him; is not that good news? When somebody comes to you in a foreign land, you like to hear him say, "When I was at your home, they were all talking about you, and they all sent loving messages to you. I saw your portrait in a locket, and I could tell that you were not forgotten." You are glad to hear that; and Jesus has your names graven on the palms of his hands, and he is pleading for you before the mercy-seat, you are not forgotten up there.

Another piece of good news is that he is coming here again,—coming here for you,—coming to be admired by you and the rest of his redeemed family when he comes to take his people up to their eternal home. The message which he has sent is, "Behold, I come quickly." What is your answer to that? I think I hear you say, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." It will not be very long before you will be with him, or else he will be with you. In a short time, you will have ended your pilgrimage here; the days of your banishment from home will be over. Wait a little longer; only a few more tears, and, then,—

> "Safe in the arms of Jesus,
> Safe on his gentle breast."

Is not that good news?

There is another piece of news, which you have often heard before,—that is, that a great many of the saints have got home already. There is good news from the Fair Havens. Many have entered there,—thousands, millions,—who have had as stormy a sea to traverse as you yourself have had; but their Pilot has brought them to their desired haven. Many, whom we loved on earth, have gone home to be "for ever with the Lord." They are all right; all is well with them. The sheep are getting home to the fold; the children are going home to their Father's house above.

I have another piece of good news, and that is, beloved brother or sister, that there is a house there for you. Our Lord Jesus Christ has made it ready for you. There is a crown there which nobody's head but yours can ever wear. There is a seat in which none but yourself can sit. There is a harp that will be silent till your fingers strike its strings. There is a robe, made for you, which no one else can wear. And let me also tell you that they are wanting you up there. "Oh!" say you, "they are so happy, and so perfect, that they surely do not want me." But they do. What does Paul

say in the Epistle to the Hebrews? "They without us should not be made perfect." Nor can they; there cannot be a perfect body till all the members are there. It cannot be a perfect heaven till all the saints are there. Jesus Christ has not all the jewels of his crown yet, and he will have a perfect crown. So they are looking for you, and waiting and watching for you, and all is ready for your reception. You shall go home soon; therefore, live in hope; and having this hope within you, purify yourselves, come out from the world more and more. "Our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." There is good news for you; is it not like cold waters to a thirsty soul?

III. Now, lastly, and very briefly. SOMETIMES, IN HEAVEN, THEY GET GOOD NEWS FROM EARTH.

Our text may be applied to the angels and to the spirits of just men made perfect: "As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country." We do not know how they receive news about us; and it is no use speculating concerning the matter; but there is one thing that we are sure of,—that is, *in heaven, they know when a sinner repents,* for our Lord Jesus Christ has told us that "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." That is, to them, good news from a far country. The angels all know about Jesus having died, and every time they see a repenting sinner washed in the blood of the atonement, they must rejoice for Jesus' sake, because he sees of the travail of his soul, and is satisfied.

I believe, too, brethren, that they get good news from a far country *when you who are running the Christian race run well;* for how does Paul put it in the 12th of Hebrews? Does he not tell us that we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses? And who are these witnesses? Why, those he had been speaking of,—those brave men and women who had performed such valorous deeds by the power of faith,—whose names he had inscribed on the triumphal arch of the 11th chapter of his Epistle. These are they who gaze upon us from their lofty seats, and they see us as we run the race, and note how we do it; and they clap their hands, as the spectators were wont to do in the old Roman foot races, and rejoice over the grace that is manifested in us, and it is as cold water to their souls when they see what God does for his struggling, suffering people.

And, moreover, there is another piece of good news that reaches the far country; that is, *when the Church of God is being built up, and the gospel is spreading in the earth.* When the world was created, did not the morning stars sing together, and shout for joy? And do you not think that, as this new spiritual world is being fashioned by the pierced hands, the spirits above are looking down, and watching the wondrous process? I am sure they do. "When the Lord shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory;" and appear, not only to those who are watching here below, who are

workers together with him, but also to those who have gone above, who rejoice together with him in his gracious work below.

And I believe it is also good news from a far country *when the saints one by one finish their course.* They get tidings up there when another saint is crossing the Jordan of death. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints," and it must be precious also in the sight of the angels and the redeemed from among men. John Bunyan pictures the shining ones as coming down to the river's brink, and I can easily conceive that it is so. I can well imagine their glad welcome to the spirit as, disencumbered of this poor body, it comes forth from the stream of death, and taking it up to the pearly gates of the celestial city. Then there is good news from a far country. I sometimes like to send a message home by some whose hands I grasp as they are in the last article of death. Rowland Hill, when he was very old, said to one aged Christian who was dying, "I hope they have not forgotten to send for old Rowley;" and then he added, "Take my love up to the three glorious Johns, the apostle John, and John Bunyan, and John Newton." I have sometimes felt inclined to do the same. Surely, a spirit there will not forget anything that was good here below, and pass, in utter unconsciousness, into the next world. It will have enough to do to think of Christ, and to behold his glory; but, mayhap, the mind will be so expanded as to be able to think of other things beside. This, however, I do not know; but this I am sure of,—that, as one by one they, for whom the Saviour died, come home, there must be joy. As they rejoice over repenting sinners, so do they rejoice over perfected saints who are without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, and who come up cleansed and delivered from anything like sin through the precious blood of the Lamb. Then is there good news for them from the far country.

I cannot help feeling that I am addressing some who know nothing about the good news of which I have been speaking. For their benefit, let me tell you a story I have heard concerning one of our English pilots. A vessel was off the coast of Kent, gently sailing, as the seamen thought, towards their desired haven. A pilot, who was watching them, observing the extreme danger in which they were, went at his utmost speed to warn them of their peril. He was hardly aboard before he shouted to the captain, "The Goodwins! The Goodwins!" They were almost on to those fatal sands, and they did not know it. At once, the course of the vessel was changed, and all sail possible was set, and they were saved as by the skin of their teeth. So, I come to you thoughtless, careless ones, and I cry to you, "Hell lieth right ahead of you,—eternal destruction from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power. Put your helm hard aport, up with such sail as you have; and may God send the breath of his Eternal Spirit to blow you off these breakers which already seem booming with the certainty of your eternal doom!" O God, almighty and ever-merciful, save them by thy grace! Save them by the precious blood of Jesus, for his dear name's sake! Amen and Amen.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE LIFE-LOOK.

A Sermon

PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 21ST, 1904,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, January 9th, 1876.

"Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else."—Isaiah xlv. 22.

I HAVE preached a good many times from this text.* I hope to do so, if life be spared, many more times. It was about twenty-six years ago,—twenty-six years exactly last Thursday,—that I looked unto the Lord, and found salvation, through this text. You have often heard me tell how I had been wandering about, seeking rest, and finding none, till a plain, unlettered, lay preacher among the Primitive Methodists stood up in the pulpit, and gave out this passage as his text: "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." He had not much to say, thank God, for that compelled him to keep on repeating his text, and there was nothing needed—by me, at any rate,—except his text. I remember how he said, "It is Christ that speaks. 'I am in the garden in an agony, pouring out my soul unto death; I am on the tree, dying for sinners; look unto me! Look unto me!' That is all you have to do. A child can look. One who is almost an idiot can look. However weak, or however poor, a man may be, he can look; and if he looks, the promise is that he shall live." Then, stopping, he pointed to where I was sitting under the gallery, and he said, "That young man there looks very miserable." I expect I did, for that is how I felt. Then he said, "There is no hope for you, young man, or any chance of getting rid of your sin, but by looking to Jesus;" and he shouted, as I think only a Primitive Methodist can, "Look! Look, young man! Look now!" And I did look; and when they sang a hallelujah before they went home, in their own earnest way, I am sure I joined in it. It happened to be a

* The following Sermons by MR. SPURGEON, upon this passage, have been previously published:—*New Park Street Pulpit*, No. 60, "Sovereignty and Salvation;" and *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, No. 2,805, "Life for a Look." The fullest account of his conversion is in his *Autobiography*, published by Messrs. Passmore and Alabaster.

day when the snow was lying deep, and more was falling; so, as I went home, those words of David kept ringing through my heart, "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow;" and it seemed as if all nature was in accord with that blessed deliverance from sin which I had found in a single moment by looking to Jesus Christ.

I have always felt inclined, when this time of the year comes round, to preach from this text. I have sometimes thought,—"They will suppose I must go over the same ground again, and give them the same sermon; and so, perhaps, I shall not have so attentive an audience." I cannot help it if it is so, for I must preach from this text. As it was blessed to me, I hope it will be blessed to somebody else. I wanted to preach from it last Thursday night, on the exact anniversary of my spiritual birthday; but I was led to take another text, and I am glad I was; for, when I entered my vestry to-night, I found on the table this note:—"Mr. Spurgeon, I want to tell you that your 'good news,'* last Thursday, was the means of reclaiming a wanderer. How good of Jesus to take such an one as I am back, and give me the joy I had when first I knew him!" The writer encloses a thanksgiving offering, and blesses the name of the Lord. So, this text has been reserved for to-night, and who knows but that there has come here somebody who was not here on Thursday night, and whom the Lord intends to bless? I only hope it may be so; indeed, I know it will be so.

Let us read the text again: "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else." This message is addressed, as you perceive, not to the Israelites, but to the Gentiles,—to the nations at the very ends of the earth. Alas! many of these nations have long been looking to their idols. They do not feel at rest, they know that they lack something; and very earnestly are devout heathens looking to their false gods for what they need. They make great sacrifices, and spend vast sums of money upon their idol temples; but salvation does not come, and cannot come, through these false gods. Jehovah bids them look to him, that they may be saved. Some among the nations are throwing off the yoke of superstition; but, sad to say, they seem to be falling into scepticism instead. The Hindoo, when educated, turns from his idols only to make an idol of his own judgment. Many men worship their own wisdom. They hope by searching to find out the Almighty unto perfection; and this theory and that they promulgate, and say, "This form of thought and the other will emancipate the human mind." Ah, it is not so! "The world by wisdom," in the old Socratic and philosophic days, worked out that problem, and the result was that they "knew not God;" but, "professing themselves to be wise, they became fools;" and that is where man, with his great thought and wisdom, always drifts to, —to some absurdity or another. Only Jehovah can save mankind. Philosophy is powerless in this matter.

The nations have been looking long, first to this thing, and then to that, to save them. Sometimes, they have looked for some great

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* See *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, No. 2,866, "Good News."

conqueror, who will break the yoke of oppression, and set the people free. But how often have they been deceived, and the idols of the democracy have turned out to be the grossest tyrants that ever lived. Then there are various international and other societies formed, by which men are to lift themselves up by confederation. They will look there, too, in vain; though all men should join hand in hand, they cannot do it. If they looked to God, there would be accomplished what all mankind would not be able to perform. One man advises this policy; another pleads for that form of government. One has this idea, and the other has another. And, every now and then, there seems to be a craze for something or other. Just now, we are told that civilization will do away with war, and I know not what besides. All evil is to be extinguished by the growth of commerce. But the Lord of hosts hath willed it that nothing shall save the nations but himself; and this poor, bleeding earth needs to be told, again and again, that, for her wounds,—and she has many of them,—there is no healing liniment but that which flows from the hands, and feet, and side of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. From the crown of her head to the sole of her foot, she is full of "wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores," and for all these there is no cure but the blessed balm that flowed from Jesu's heart on Calvary,—no remedy but the one sacrifice of Jesus Christ. "Look unto me," saith he, "and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else." O Lord, turn the eyes of the nations to thyself, and to thy Son! When this happens, then shall the day of the world's salvation have fully come.

The general principle holds good in each particular case. As it is with the nations at the ends of the earth, so must it be with me, so must it be, dear friends, with you. There is no salvation but by looking unto God in Christ. Let us try to turn that thought over, not merely with the view of thinking of it, but that we may carry it into effect,—that, if there be salvation to be had, we may have it, and have it at once. O God, grant that it may be so!

First, we shall ask, *What does the word "Look" mean in reference to God?* Secondly, *for what part of salvation are we to look to God?* Thirdly, *what is our encouragement to look?* And, fourthly, *when is the best time to look?*

I. First, Jehovah says, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." WHAT DOES THIS WORD "LOOK" MEAN? It means a great deal more than I can tell you; and, among other things, it means this.

First, *consider that there is a God*, and enthrone him in your mind as a real Person, the one living and true God. You have been trying to cure yourself of your spiritual maladies; now think of God as the great Physician of your soul. Let your mind turn towards him. You are like that young man who left his father's house, and whose circumstances became so bad, through his own fault, that he was obliged to take up very low and mean employment; and yet, with all that he could do, he did not earn enough to fill his belly. The best thing that he could do was to remember

that he had a father; and the happiest day for him was when he came back to his father, and received a loving welcome from him.

You say that you are not happy, you are not at rest, your conscience is disturbed, and you have tried ever so many things in order to get peace. Now, think about your God. Think about the loving Father who receives his wandering prodigal children; and as you think of him, you will have begun to look to him. While you are thinking about him, I wish you would remember this concerning him,—that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." Think of that wonderful truth that God came here in human flesh and blood, and, for us men and for our salvation, died a cruel death upon the tree. Turn that over and over again, for it is there that your only hope of salvation lies. Do think of that; read often—

"The old, old story
Of Jesus and his love."

Think over all the details of it; accustom yourself to look towards God in Christ Jesus in your thoughts and contemplations. By the blessing of the Holy Spirit, this will breed faith in you. Set your face that way,—look at God as he has revealed himself in the person of the great Propitiation, Jesus Christ his Son.

Looking to God means, however, more than that. When you have considered him, and taken him into your calculations, then *address yourself to him.* Speak to him. Tell him where you are, and what you are. Tell him what you feel, and what you do not feel, and what you ought to feel, and what you wish to feel. Tell him what you want which you have not yet got. If you cannot pray, tell him so; if you cannot repent, and cannot believe, tell him so. Only speak to him, for that speaking will be a turning to look, and I find that the Hebrew word used here is not so well expressed by the word "look" as by the phrase "turning to look." If I want to look at the clock above my head, I must turn to look at it. In that fashion, I want you to turn towards God, to consider him, and then to speak to him. Tell him that you are a wretch undone without his sovereign grace. Tell him whatever you know to be the truth; do not mock him with mere words that do not come from your heart, but let your heart speak to him. Address him, for that is looking to him.

Only, *mind that you do get to God.* The mischief is, dear friends, that we often stop somewhere short of God when we are seeking salvation. A Romanist, for instance, erects a crucifix, and bows down before it. The original intention of the crucifix, no doubt, was to help the person who used it to remember the death of Christ; but, frequently, the thought rests on the crucifix, instead of upon the Christ. If the Romanist says that he does not worship the image, it is not true, because there is a certain "Our Lady of Lourdes," and another "Notre Dame de la Garde," and other "Our Ladies." Why is it that the Virgin Mary in a certain church, or a certain town, works great cures, and gets more worship, than "Our Lady" in a certain other place? The fact is, it is the

image that is worshipped, and so is it with the crucifix; that gets the Romanists' worship, and not the Christ. They stop there; but why do I talk about this to you Protestants? Why, because many of you do just the same in other respects. You say, "Now, if I am to be converted, I ought to read the Bible." Yes, that is quite right. Read the Bible; but, if you stop at the Bible, you will no more get to God than if you stop at the crucifix. What you need is to get to God through what you read, and not merely to come to the Book. The Bible, or the most gracious words, or the most appropriate collects, or the most pious prayers, cannot save you; you must pass through these things, which ought to be helps, and not make them into barriers; for, if you make them into barriers by stopping there, you never will be saved. You have to get to God, dear heart,—to God in Jesus Christ; and I pray you, do not stop till you feel, "I have spoken to God in Jesus Christ; I have confessed to him my sins; I have sought his forgiveness; I have asked him for mercy." You are sure to get it if you have done so. But if you stop at this point,—"I have prayed so often, I have read so much," these very readings and prayings will get to be idols, and they will keep you away from God. I used, when seeking the Lord, to read very much Doddridge's "Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul," and an admirable book it is; and Baxter's "Call to the Unconverted." I would wake up as soon as the sun was up in the morning that I might read these books; but I must confess that, for many a day, I stopped at Doddridge's "Rise and Progress" and Baxter's "Call." When I had read so much, and tried to feel what those good men said, there I stuck. Oh, that I had gone to Christ before! Oh, that I had got away from Doddridge's "Rise and Progress" and Baxter's "Call", and gone to Jesus Christ himself! I am not finding fault with those books; I commend them, but I find fault with myself for making so bad a use of the books. In like manner, I do not find fault with prayer or the reading of the Scriptures; God forbid! But I do complain of putting prayer and the reading of the Scriptures into the place of getting to God; for it is looking to him as he is revealed in Jesus Christ that will save the soul, and nothing short of that, be it what it may, will do so. Therefore, looking to God means that we are to consider God, and then to address ourselves to him.

In the next place, to look to him means that *we must know that, if we are ever to be saved, salvation must come from God alone.* Learn this, O man, that you are helpless and hopeless apart from God;—that you are shut up, and cannot come forth, bound with fetters of iron, and laid like the dead in their graves, numbered among the slain like those that go down into the pit; and no arm can help you but the arm of the Omnipotent; nothing can save you but the blood of Jesus Christ.

Then, next, to look to him means *expect that he will save you.* Oh, what a step that is for anyone to take! I would that, by God's grace, you might take it, saying, "Nobody but God can save me. Salvation comes from him, but he is gracious; he has given his dear Son to die for sinners. I, a sinner,—the most unworthy,

perhaps, who ever lived,—will, nevertheless, dare to hope that I shall be saved. Nay, more,—

> "'He has promised to receive
> All who on his Son believe;'—

"so I will now trust his Son, and look to him to give me full and free salvation because I trust him." Joseph Hart's hymn puts it,—

> "Venture on him, venture wholly,
> Let no other trust intrude;
> None but Jesus
> Can do helpless sinners good."

Some have objected to the verse, because they say it is not a venture. It is very easy to be too critical. It is a venture to the sinner's thought; it appears to him to be a venture, and you must not expect him to talk as you wise men talk. Do not put into a sinner's mouth words that would be above his range of thought. I know it seemed a wonderful venture to me. I thought, "Can it be true that this is all I have to do? Have I to believe God's grace in Christ, and trust myself only to that?" Why, if the minister had said, "You must go home, and take a whip, and flog yourself;—twenty lashes will do;"—I tell you I would have laid them on as heavily as I could, for I should have felt, "I will make sure work of it;" and they would have been twenty of the sweetest cuts that ever a man endured. If they made me smart, I would have blessed God for them, so long as I received mercy through them. But there was nothing in the gospel about lashing myself,—nothing even about lashing my conscience; I was told simply to look to God as he revealed himself in Jesus Christ, and I did so, and thus I was saved.

Possibly, someone asks, "Does that faith make any difference to a man?" It makes all the difference in the world. Suppose you have a bad servant, who is always doing wrong things; and you find out that the great reason why he so provokes you is that he does not believe in you, and has no respect for you. But, one day, you convince him of your kind feeling towards him, and prove to him that all you wish for is his good, and that you have been seeking his good all the while you have had him. Now that man is saved from his ugly temper by believing you to be good and kind; and from the moment when this change takes place, there is nothing too much for him to do for you. That is just the effect that faith in God has upon a sinner's moral character. Before you believe in God, you do not care much about him. It is true that you may do a few good works, with the hope of thereby getting salvation, just as your servant does as much or as little as he dares do, for the sake of his wages. But, oh! when once you believe in God, and serve him out of love, then you become like those old-fashioned servants that our grandmothers used to have; we cannot get them now. They used to serve their masters and mistresses from motives of affection,—those old body-servants that the squires and dames used to have, who would cleave to them, wages or no wages, because

they loved them so. What a grand thing it is to have faith in the heart! It will save a man entirely from his old ways, and his old lusts, and his old sins, by making him love God, and serve God out of love, which is the mightiest transforming motive that was ever implanted in the bosom of a lost soul. This is how God saves men, —by leading them to trust in him in Jesus Christ.

II. Secondly, FOR WHAT PART OF SALVATION ARE WE TO LOOK TO GOD?

For every part of it, from beginning to end; and, first, *for the pardon of sin*, you must look to God in Christ; for who can pardon an offence except the person who was offended? If somebody over there has offended a brother yonder, it would be no use for me to say to that person, "I forgive you the offence." The other brother might say, "The wrong was not done to you, it was done to me. Only I, who have been offended, can forgive the offence." So, if you want the pardon of your sin, it is evident that it can only come from God. But you tell me that you feel as if you were not fit to be forgiven. Very well then, if there be such a fitness,—I know there is none,—but if there be any truth in what you mean, that fitness must be given you by God, and you must look to him for it.

"True belief and true repentance,—
Every grace that brings you nigh,—
Without money,
Come to Jesus Christ, and buy."

Possibly you say to me, "It is not merely that I want to have my sins forgiven; *I want to become a new man.*" You must look for that also to God. I think that the best man to clean a watch is the watchmaker, and the best person to renew the heart is the God who made the heart. He who made you can alone remake you. There is no power under heaven, except the power that created you, which can create you anew in Christ Jesus; so you must look to God for that.

But you say, "Well, if I were made a new man, I fear that I should go back to my old sins. *Must I not trust to something to keep me?*" No, to nothing but God; for all the bonds and all the devices that men make, to keep themselves from sin, are of no more strength than a spider's web. God must keep you alive as well as make you live; "for I am God," saith he, "and there is none else." Rest in the almighty power of God to keep you from going back to sin after he has rescued you from it.

You know, also, that you must be perfect, or you can never enter heaven. *How are you to become perfect?* Well, you must look to God for that, too, for he, the perfectly Holy One, can sanctify you wholly, spirit, soul, and body. May your faith embrace the whole of salvation, and see it to be all in God in Christ, and look to God in Christ Jesus for it all!

III. Our third question is, WHAT IS OUR ENCOURAGEMENT TO LOOK TO GOD?

I tried to show you what it was to look —to consider God, to speak with him, to trust in him as he is revealed in Christ Jesus,

and to rest wholly in him. You say, "What is my encouragement to do that, and to expect that thus I shall be saved? May I do it? I know that trusting in Christ saves men, but may I trust him?"

Your encouragement to do this is, first of all, *God's command:* "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." We, certainly, almost beyond the inhabitants of any other country, might have been called "the ends of the earth." There was a time when England was reckoned to be the Ultima Thule,—the far-off land; it was supposed that there could be nothing beyond the British Islands. When the prophet spoke, these were the very ends of the earth; so, surely, God commands you, my dear hearer, to look unto him, inasmuch as you belong to the ends of the earth. If you tell me that you come from America, well, you also come from the ends of the earth. Do you say that you come from Australia? That is another of the ends of the earth. Some of you sail round the world; well, sometime or other, you have been at the ends of the earth; and you know that, when God sends his command to the ends of the earth, it always includes everything within its bounds. He certainly commands the middle as well as the ends. Those who are farthest off from him are bidden to look unto him; and as he commands you to do it, what better warrant can you desire than his command? The gospel command is, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." You never ought to say, "May I believe?" for God commands you to do so, and threatens you with punishment if you do not, for he says, "He that believeth not shall be damned." The only warrant for a sinner's believing is the command of the gospel. Oh, that you might be encouraged by that!

The next encouragement for you is *God's promise:* "Look unto me, and be ye saved,"—as much as to say, "As surely as you look, you are saved. When you look, you are saved." Does it not mean that? If anyone said to you, "Sit down, and eat, and be filled," you would not say, "He only means that I am to sit down at a bare table;" but you would feel sure that he meant that there should be something on the table of which you might freely eat. So, sinner, do but look to the Lord; turn thine eye in confidence to God in Christ Jesus, for there is no other God and no other Saviour; and when thou hast done this, thou shalt be saved at once.

Still further to encourage you, you have *the fact of his Godhead:* "for I am God." You need a God to save you. You have a great load of sin resting upon you, but the Omnipotent can lift it off your shoulders. Then, there are the bonds of iniquity, the old habits of forty years, perhaps of fifty years; but Christ can tear away the iron net, and break the chains, and set the captive free in a moment, for he is God. Were the Saviour any less than Divine, I should not dare to encourage sinners to believe in him; but there is a Divine Saviour, infinitely strong, and infinitely gracious, so, thou blackest, foulest, vilest sinner, why shouldst thou not obey the command of my text, and look unto him, expecting mercy and favour from him?

Another encouragement to you comes from *God's character.* He knew that you sinners would be afraid that his justice would stand in your way, and that, though able to save you, he might not do it

because you have been such great sinners, and he must punish you; so kindly read what he says in the latter part of the 21st verse: "There is no God else beside me: a just God and a Saviour: there is none beside me." God can justly save you by his wondrous plan of substitution; if you look unto him, he will not mar the integrity of his government or the severity of his justice in order to save you; for, by the blood of his dear Son, his law has been so magnified, and made so honourable, that he can be as just in pardoning as he would have been just in punishing. This doctrine of the atoning sacrifice of Christ is the marvellous mystery of the gospel, the greatest of all revealed truths; and this ought to take away from the guilty conscience everything that makes it fear to trust God. God's justice is satisfied by Jesu's death; therefore, trust him; I implore thee, trust him. Didst thou know the joy that faith brings,—couldst thou but understand the peace, the liberty, the transport, the bliss, which simple confidence in Christ will bring to thee,—thou wouldst not need my pleadings, but thou wouldst say, "Blessed Jesus, I rush into thine arms, accepting thee as my Saviour, and rejoicing in thy great salvation."

IV. Our last question was to be, WHAT IS THE BEST TIME IN WHICH TO LOOK TO THE LORD?

I answer,—the best time is God's time. And when is God's time? What does the Holy Spirit say is the best time? "*To-day*, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." This is God's time,—to-day. I do not remember, nor do I think there is in the whole Bible, a single precept addressed to the sinner, requiring him to repent and believe to-morrow, or next week. The gospel promise runs, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved;" but it does not say, "Believe next February," or "Believe next March," or "next year." It is understood that every gospel precept or command is for this present moment. God himself, my hearer,—not I, poor, feeble man, but God himself—saith to thee, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon;" and he says this to you at this very moment. What is thine answer? What reply shall I give to him who sent me to you with this message? Wilt thou have him to be thy Saviour, or wilt thou not? Say one or the other, which thou wilt. If I may plead with thee, I urge thee to say "Yes" from thy very heart. But I shall be almost satisfied if you will say one or the other, for that will bring you to the point; and if you say "no", it may be that, having taken up that position, you may begin to think where you are, and you will go home saying, "I have refused to look to Christ; I have refused the great salvation, and deliberately said, 'I will not look for salvation in God through Jesus Christ.'" I wish, sinner, that you would even do that rather than act as so many do, who say, "Go thy way for this time; when we have a more convenient season, we will send for thee;" for that tends to quiet conscience, although the convenient season never comes, and Felix is most *infelix*. There is nothing felicitous in what he says. Happy by name, he is most

unhappy in his fatal procrastination concerning this all-important matter. I must have an answer to give to him that sent me. Wilt thou now be saved or not? God sets the time; the time is now; so, say "Yes" or "No."

Let me, however, remind you that *the present is the only time you have.* The past is gone; the future may never come. Should it come, it will be present when it does come. On this winged hour all eternity hangs. Possibly, you are thinking of what you will do when you get home; but you do not know that you will get there. Do not many fall in the street never to rise again? You are calculating upon what you will do to-morrow. The image of death will be on your face when you are asleep; are you quite sure that you will ever awake from that form of death into real life again? May not that bed become your sepulchre? You have planned what you intend to do on Monday, and Tuesday, and Wednesday; yet you know not what a day may bring forth. There is a seat, just there, that may speak to some of you. There used to sit, in that pew, one who was well known to you. He came home from business feeling slightly unwell; the doctor was sent for, but our friend was dead ere he arrived. Why should not that which has happened to many others, who have attended here, happen also to you, or to me? "Be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh."

If I knew how to preach to you, so that I might win men to believe in Jesus Christ, God knoweth that there is nothing that I would not say, or leave unsaid, that might conduce to that end. I know that there is no power in mere rhetoric or oratory, so I have chosen to speak to you very plainly and simply, without any ornament of speech, and almost without an illustration, that he who runs may read. It is not one half so much my business, dear hearer, that you should be saved as it is yours. When I have faithfully delivered the word of salvation, I wash my hands of you. If you refuse it, I cannot help it. At your own door must your doom lie, and at your own door alone. Yet would I pluck you by the sleeve, and say, "Dear friend, you do need to be saved. Salvation must come from God, and he bids you look to him for it. Trust his Son for it. God in Christ must be your hope. Will you trust him? Do you understand me? Simply relying upon the atoning sacrifice, trusting in it, resting in it, believing God to be God, and henceforth yielding yourself up to be ruled by his goodness;—believing Christ to be able to save you, and yielding yourself up to be saved by him, and guided in the way of holiness and peace;—believing that the blood of Jesus can take away your sin, and trusting to it so to do;—if so it be, it is done, and you are saved." The salvation has commenced which will never end, for, in the simple act of faith, there lies a living seed which the devil himself cannot crush,—which, though it be small as the mustard seed, will begin to swell, and germinate, and send forth its shoots, till it shall be such a tree that many a happy bird of the air shall come, and sit and sing among its branches; and your life, made happy and shaded by this blessed faith in Jesus, shall then bring forth fruit unto God, and the end shall be everlasting life. God grant that it may be so, for his dear Son's sake! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

ISAIAH XLV.

The first paragraph concerns Cyrus, and the great work for which God raised him up.

Verses 1—4. *Thus saith the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut; I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron: and I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I, the LORD, which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel. For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me.*

A remarkable prophecy, issued long before the time of Cyrus, foretelling that he should conquer Babylon, and destroy it; and, though for many a day Cyrus knew nothing about the Most High God, yet was he used, in the Lord's hand, for wonderful purposes. Sometimes, a man may have been used of God for great ends without his own knowledge. When, however, he comes to the discovery of that fact, as he may if he will but think it over, should he not reverently bow before the Most High, and worship him who, though unknown to him, had been his Helper and his Friend?

5, 6. *I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me: that they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me. I am the LORD, and there is none else.*

Those who believe in idols think that there may be lords many and gods many; but he who is a true follower of Jehovah knows that there can be no other god beside him. He filleth all space, and there is no room for another. There is but one Creator, one Preserver, and one God, who alone is to be worshipped.

7. *I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things.*

Cyrus was a believer in two gods,—one the god of light, and the other the god of darkness. Hence this declaration from God's servant, the prophet, that there was no prince of darkness who was a god, but that all things were made by the one Most High God.

8—11. *Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness: let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together; I the LORD have created it. Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? or thy work, He hath no hands? Woe unto him that saith unto his father, What begettest thou? or to the woman, What hast thou brought forth? Thus saith the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker, Ask me of things to come concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands command ye me.*

Note the tone which God uses. He speaks like a God, and claims to be above the questioning of his creatures. These verses remind us of what the apostle Paul wrote: "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?" God is the great Sovereign over all, and he claims a sovereign's place. He doeth as he wills, but he always wills to do that which is just and right.

12—17. *I have made the earth, and created man upon it: I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded. I have raised him up in righteousness, and I will direct all his ways: he shall build my city, and he shall let go my captives, not for price nor reward, saith the* LORD *of hosts. Thus saith the* LORD, *The labour of Egypt, and merchandise of Ethiopia and of the Sabeans, men of stature, shall come over unto thee, and they shall be thine: they shall come after thee; in chains they shall come over, and they shall fall down unto thee, they shall make supplication unto thee, saying, Surely God is in thee; and there is none else, there is no God. Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour. They shall be ashamed, and also confounded, all of them: they shall go to confusion together that are makers of idols. But Israel shall be saved in the* LORD *with an everlasting salvation: ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end.*

If you are God's people, you have a God of whom you need never be ashamed, and one who will not leave you to be ashamed of your confidence and hope. Those that trust to false gods will be ashamed; those that rest upon themselves will be confounded; but stay thyself upon God, O man, and thou shalt never be ashamed, world without end!

18, 19. *For thus saith the* LORD *that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I am the* LORD; *and there is none else. I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth: I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain: I the* LORD *speak righteousness, I declare things that are right.*

Here is the glory of our God,—that his every word is true, and that he has never said, in any place, that which contradicts what he has spoken in public to his people. You may safely rest upon the God who is always the same, who never plays fast and loose with his promises, or speaketh anything in secret contrary to his pledged word. He is as true as he is sovereign; therefore, stay yourselves upon him.

20, 21. *Assemble yourselves and come; draw near together, ye that are escaped of the nations: they have no knowledge that set up the wood of their graven image, and pray unto a god that cannot save, Tell ye, and bring them near; yea, let them take counsel together: who hath declared this from ancient time? who hath told it from that time? have not I the* LORD?

He challenges all the idols to prove that they had uttered any true prophecy,—that they had spoken about Cyrus, or anybody else, from ancient times, so that the prophecy was literally fulfilled. There were dark double-meaning oracles, with which the false priests mocked their votaries; but the true words of God—his ancient prophecies—proved him to be the only real and true God.

21—23. *And there is no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me. Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else. I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear.*

Glory be to God, it will be so in the latter days. It shall come to pass that the truth shall be universally triumphant, and the one God, who made the heavens and the earth, shall be worshipped both by heaven and by earth, without any discordant note.

24, 25. *Surely, shall one say, in the* LORD *have I righteousness and strength: even to him shall men come; and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed. In the* LORD *shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.*

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

"READY, AY, READY!"

A Sermon

PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 28TH, 1904,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On a Thursday Evening, during the winter of 1861—2.

"Ready to perish."—Isaiah xxvii. 13.
"Ready to forgive."—Psalm lxxxvi. 5.
"The graves are ready for me."—Job xvii. 1.

WHEN attempting to prepare for this service, I found it impossible to fix my mind upon any one subject. This afternoon, I had to take rather a long journey to visit a friend who is sick unto death, and at his bedside I trust I have learned some lessons of encouragement, and have been animated by witnessing the joy and peace which God grants to his children in their declining hours. Finding that I could not fix upon any one subject, I thought that I would have three. It may be that, out of the three, there will be one intended by divine grace for a third of the audience, the second for another third, and the other for the rest, so that there will be a portion of meat in due season for all. You know, dear friends, that the motto of our navy is, "Ready, ay, ready!" That is something like my present subject, for I have three texts in which the word "Ready" occurs, each time in a different connection.

I. The first text will be specially addressed to those who are under concern of soul, having been led, by the enlightening influence of the Divine Spirit, to see their state by nature, and to tremble in the prospect of their deserved doom. The text which will suit their case is in Isaiah xxvii. 13: "READY TO PERISH." "They shall come which were ready to perish."

By nature, all men, whether they know it or not, are ready to perish. Human nature is, like a blind man, always in danger; nay, worse than that, it is like a blind man upon the verge of a tremendous cliff, ready to take the fatal step which will lead to his destruction. The most callous and proud, the most careless and profane, cannot, by their indifference or their boasting, altogether evade the apprehension that their state, by nature, is alarming and defenceless. They may try to laugh it away from their minds, but they cannot laugh away the fact. They may shut their eyes to it; but they shall no

more escape, by shutting their eyes, than doth the silly ostrich escape from the hunter by thrusting its head into the sand. Whether thou wilt have it so, or no, fast young man in the dawn of thy days;—whether thou wilt have it so, or no, blustering merchant in the prime of thine age;—whether thou wilt have it so, or no, hardened old man in the petrified state of thy moral conscience;—it is so: thou art ready to perish. Thy jeers cannot deliver thee; thy sarcasms about eternal wrath cannot quench it; and all thy contemptuous scorn and thine arrogant pride cannot evade thy doom, they do but hasten it. There are some persons, however, who are aware of their danger; to them I speak. They are fitly described by the Spirit of God in these words of the prophet: "The great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come which were ready to perish." Having passed through this anguish myself, I think I can describe, from experience, what some of you are now suffering.

You are ready to perish, in the first place, because *you feel sure that you will perish.* You did not think so once, but you do now. Once, you could afford to put away the thought, with a laugh, as a matter which might, or might not, be true; but, anyhow, it did not much concern you. But, now, you feel that you will be lost as surely as if it could be demonstrated to you by logic. In fact, the divine logic of the law has thundered it into your soul, and you know it. You feel it to be certain that you shall, ere long, be driven from the presence of God with that terrible sentence, "Depart, ye cursed." If any unbeliever should tell you that there is no wrath to come, you would reply, "There is, for I feel it is due to me. My conscience tells me that I am condemned already, and ere long I am quite certain to drink of the wormwood and the gall of the wrath of God." You have signed your own death-warrant, you have put on the black cap, and condemned yourself; or, rather, you have pleaded guilty before your Judge, you have said, "Guilty, my Lord;" and now you think you see before your eye the scaffold, and yourself ready to be executed. You feel it to be so sure that you even anticipate the judgment day; you dreamed of it, the other night, and you thought you heard the trumpet of the archangel opening all the graves, and wakening all the dead. You have already, in imagination, stood before the bar of God; you feel your sentence to be so certain that conscience has read it over in your hearing, and anticipated its terrors. You are among those who are ready to perish, so permit me to say that I am glad you have come here, for this is the very spot where God delights to display his pardoning grace. He is ready to save those who are thus ready to perish. Those who write themselves down as lost are the special objects of our Saviour's mission of mercy, for "the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

You are ready to perish, in another sense, for *you feel as if your perishing was very near.* You are like the dying man who gasps for breath, and thinks that each gasp must be his last; his pulse is feeble, his tongue is dry with feverish heat, the clammy sweat is on his brow. The valley of the shadow of death casts its gloomy shade on his pale cheeks, and he feels that he must soon die. Is it not

thus that some of you feel just now? You feel that you are coming near to the wrath of God. I have known the day when, as I lay down to rest, I dreaded the thought that, perhaps, I should never awake in this world; or, at mid-day, I have walked in the fields, and wondered that the earth did not open, and swallow me up. A terrible noise was in my ears; my soul was tossed to and fro; I longed to find a refuge, but there seemed to be none; while ever ringing in my ears were the words, "The wrath to come!" "The wrath to come!" "The wrath to come!" Oh, how vividly is the wrath to come pictured before the eyes of the awakened sinner! He does not look upon it as a thing that is to come in ten, twelve, or twenty years, but as a thing that may be before long, yea, even to-day. He looks upon himself as ready to perish because his final overthrow appears to be so close. I am glad if any of you are in this plight, for God does not thus alarm men unless he has purposes of mercy concerning them, and designs for their good. He has made you fear you are perishing that you may have no perishing to fear. He has brought it home to you in this life that he may remove it for ever from you in the life that is to come. He has made you tremble now that you may not tremble then. He has put before you these dreadful things that, as with a fiery finger, they may point you to Christ, the only refuge, and, as with a thundering voice, they may cry to you, as the angels cried to Lot, "Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed."

It may be that I am also addressing some, who not only realize the sureness and the nearness of their destruction, but *they have begun to feel it.* "Begun to feel it," says someone; "is that possible?" Yes, that it is; when day and night God's hand is heavy upon us, and our moisture is turned into the drought of summer, we begin to know something of what a sinner feels when justice and the law are let loose upon him. Did you ever read John Bunyan's "Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners"? There was a man who had, even here, foretastes of the miseries of the lost; and there are some of us who can, even now, hardly look back to the time of our conviction without a shudder. I hope there is not a creature alive who has had deeper convictions than I had, or five years of more intolerable agony than those which crushed the very life out of my youthful spirit. But this I can say, that terror of conscience, that alarm about the wrath of God, that intense hatred of past sin, and yet consciousness of my inability to avoid it in the future, were such combinations of thought that I can only describe them in George Herbert's words,—

> **"My thoughts are all a case of knives**
> **Breaking my poor heart."**

Oh, the tortures of the man who feels his guilt, but does not know the remedy for it! To look leprosy in the face, but not to know that it may be healed! To walk the lazar-house, and hear that there is no physician there! To see the flame, but not to know

that it can be quenched! To be in the dungeon, but never to know the rescue and deliverance! O ye that are ready to perish, I sympathize with you in your present sufferings, but I do not lament them! This is the way in which God begins with those whom he intends to bless;—not to the same degree in all, but yet after the same kind. He destroys our confidence in our own works, and then gives us confidence in Christ's work. You know how Bunyan describes Christian as being much tumbled up and down in his mind; and when his wife and children came round about him, he could only tell them that the city in which they lived was to be destroyed; and though his easy-going neighbours told him not to believe it, and not to make such a fuss about it, the truth had come home to him with too much power to be put away. Atheist might say it was all a lie, and Pliable might give slight heed to it, and pretend to believe it for a season; but Christian knew it to be true, so he ran to the wicket gate, and the cross, that he might escape from the wrath to come. To the careless, these words, "Ready to perish," should sound an alarm. May God the Holy Spirit, while I preach upon the second text, enable me to blow the great trumpet of the jubilee! May the gladsome sound reach the heart of him that is ready to perish! May he know that divine mercy brought him here that he might find a God ready to pardon!

II. My second text is in Psalm lxxxvi. 5: "READY TO FORGIVE." Does not that ring like a silver bell? The other was a doleful note, like that of St. Sepulchre's bell when it tolls the knell of a criminal about to be executed: "Ready to perish." But this rings like a marriage peal: "Ready to forgive. Ready to forgive." What meaneth it when it saith that God is ready to forgive?

"Ready" means, as you all know, *prepared*. A man is not ready to go by railway until his trunk is packed, and he is about to start. A man cannot be said to be ready to emigrate till he has the means to pay his passage, and the different things needed for his transit, and for his settling down when he gets to his destination. No road is ready till it is cleared; nothing is ready, in fact, till it is prepared. Sinner, God is ready to forgive; that is, everything is prepared by which you may be forgiven. The road used to be blocked up; but Jesus Christ hath, with his cross, tunnelled every mountain, filled every valley, and bridged every chasm, so that the way of pardon is now fully prepared. There is no need for God to say, "I would pardon this sinner, but how shall my justice be honoured?" Sinner, God's justice has been satisfied; the sin of all who believe, or who ever will believe, was laid upon Christ when he died upon the tree. If thou believest in him, thy sin was punished upon him, and it was for ever put away by the great atonement which he offered; so that, now, the righteous God can come out of the ivory palace of his mercy, stretch out his hands of love, and say, "Sinner, I am reconciled to thee; be thou reconciled to me."

"Sprinkled now with blood the throne,
Why beneath thy burdens groan?
All the wrath on him was laid,
Justice owns the ransom paid."

In the case of the ancient Israelites, it was necessary that the sacrifice should be slain, and be burned upon the altar. So, the Divine Victim has been slain upon Calvary. Once for all, the sacrifice for sin has been offered by Jesus, accepted by the Father, and witnessed by the Holy Spirit. God is ready—that is to say, he is prepared—to forgive all who will believe in Jesus Christ. You think that much preparation is needed on your part, but you are greatly mistaken. All things are ready; the oxen and the fatlings are killed, the feast is spread, the servants are sent with the invitations to the banquet; all thou hast to do, poor penitent, is to come, and sit down, and eat with thankfulness to the great Giver of the feast. The bath is filled, O black sinner, so come and wash! The garment is woven from the top throughout, O ye naked, so come and put it on! The price is paid, O ye ransomed ones, so take your blood-bought liberty! All is done. "It is finished," rings from Calvary's summit; God is ready to forgive.

But the word "ready" means something more than prepared; we sometimes use the term to indicate that *a thing can be easily done.* We ask, "Can you do such-and-such a thing?" "Oh, yes!" you reply, "readily." Or perhaps we remind you of a promise you have given, and ask if you can carry it out; and you say, "Oh, yes! I am quite ready to fulfil my engagement." Sinner, it is an easy thing for God to forgive thee. "Indeed," say you; "but you don't know where I was last night." No, and I don't want to know; but it is easy for God to pardon anybody who is not in hell. But you ask, "How can he do it?" He speaks, and it is done. He has but to say to you, "Thy sins, which are many, are all forgiven;" and it is done. Pardon is an instantaneous work; justification is rapid as a lightning flash. You may be black one moment, and as white as alabaster the next; guilty,—absolved; condemned,—acquitted; lost,—found; dead,—made alive. It takes the Lord no time to do this, he does it easily. O brethren, if he could make a world with a word; if he could say, "Let there be light," and there was light;—surely, now that Christ has offered up himself as a bleeding sacrifice for sin, God hath but to speak, and the pardon is given! As soon as he saith, "I will; be thou clean;" the most leprous sinner is perfectly cleansed. O sinner, wilt thou not offer the prayer, "Save, Lord, or I perish"? Wilt thou not ask the Lord to forgive thee? Since he can so readily forgive, wilt thou not cry, "Jesus, save me, or I die"? Stretch forth thine hand, poor trembling woman up yonder, and touch the hem of his garment, and thou shalt be made whole, for he is ready to forgive; that is, he can do it with ease.

Again, the word "ready" frequently means *promptly* or *quickly.* In this sense also, God is ready to forgive. I know that some of you imagine that you must endure months of sorrow before you can be forgiven. There is no necessity that you should wait even another hour for this great blessing. After what I have been saying concerning the experience through which others have passed, some of you may fancy that you must be for four or five years floundering about in the Slough of Despond; but there is no need for you to

do that. The plan of salvation is this: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Let me give you a picture. Paul and Silas have been thrust into the inner prison at Philippi, and their feet made fast in the stocks. Though they have been brutally beaten, they are singing at midnight, singing of pardon bought with blood, singing of the dying and risen Lamb of God; and, as they sing, suddenly there is an earthquake. The foundations of the prison shake, the doors fly open, and the gaoler, fearing that his prisoners have escaped, leaps out, draws his sword, and is about to kill himself when he hears a voice crying, "Do thyself no harm; we are all here." He calls for a light, springs in, and falls tremblingly at his prisoners' feet, and says, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" What would some of you have said in reply to that question? "Well, you must first believe the guilt of your sin more than you do at present; you had better go home, and pray about the matter." That was not Paul's answer; he said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." And, to prove that he was saved, the apostle baptized him, and all his, straightway, and we are expressly told that they all believed. What do you say to that, you old deacons, who say, as many country deacons still do, that the young converts ought to be "summered and wintered" before they are baptized? I have known scores of good old souls, in the country, who have said, "We must not take Mrs. So-and-so into the church; we have not had time to prove her enough." But the apostle knew that, as they had believed, they were fit to be baptized because they were pardoned.

> **"The moment a sinner believes,**
> **And trusts in his crucified God,**
> **His pardon at once he receives,**
> **Redemption in full through his blood."**

If the Lord wills, you may be pardoned this very moment. Jehovah needs not months and years in which to write out the charter of your forgiveness, and put the great seal of heaven to it. He can speak the word, and swifter than the lightning flash the message shall come to thee, "Thy sins, which are many, are all forgiven;" and thou shalt say, "I'm forgiven,—

> **"'A monument of grace,**
> **A sinner saved by blood;**
> **The streams of love I trace**
> **Up to the Fountain, God;**
> **And in his sacred bosom see**
> **Eternal thoughts of love to me.'"**

The word "ready" is also frequently used to signify *cheerfulness.* When a person says to you, "Will you give me your help?" you say, "Oh, certainly, with readiness!" That means with cheerfulness. The Lord loveth a cheerful giver, and I am sure that he is himself a cheerful Giver. You do not know, poor soul, how glad God is when he forgives a soul. The angels sang when God made the world, but we do not read that he sang then; yet, in the last chapter of the

prophecy of Zephaniah, we read: "The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing." Only think of it,—the Triune God singing! What a thought,—the Deity bursting out into song! And what is this about? It is over his pardoned people, his blood-bought chosen ones. O soul, thou thinkest, perhaps, that God will be hard to be entreated, and that he will give his mercy grudgingly! But the mercy of the Lord is as free as the air we breathe. When the sun shines, it shines freely, else it were not the sun; and when God forgives, he forgives freely, else he were not God. Never did water leap from the crystal fount with half such freeness and generous liberality as grace flows from the heart of God. He giveth forth love, joy, peace, and pardon, and he giveth them as a king gives to a king. Thou canst not empty his treasury, for it is inexhaustible. He is not enriched by withholding, nor is he impoverished by bestowing.

Soul, thou dost libel him when thou thinkest that he is unwilling to forgive thee. I once had, as thou now hast, that hard thought of my loving Lord, that he would not forgive me. I thought he might, perhaps, do so one day, yet I could hardly think so well of him as to believe that he would. I came to his feet very timidly, and said, "Surely, he will spurn me hence." I supposed that he would say to me, "Get thee gone, thou dog of a sinner, for thou hast doubted my love." But it was not so. Ah! you should see with what a smile he received the prodigal, with what fond tenderness he clasped him to his breast, with what glad eyes he led him to his house, and with what a radiant countenance he set him by his side, at the head of the table, and said, "Let us eat, and be merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again: he was lost, and is found."

I would that I could write upon every heart here, and grave upon every memory, those sweet words, "Ready to forgive." Are there any of you who do not want to be forgiven? The day will come when you will want this blessing. Sailor, are you in this building? Within a little while, you may be out upon the lonely sea, the waves may have swallowed up your vessel, and you may be just clinging to an oar. When the waters surge around you, how gladly you will remember that God is ready to forgive; but how much better it would be to trust your soul to him now! Some, whom I am now addressing, will probably die this week; I am not making a rash assertion, my statement is based upon the statistics of mortality. O soul, thou sayest that it is nothing to thee now; but when thou art in the article of death,—and that may be before another Sabbath's sun shall rise,—how might this note ring like music in thy dying ears, "Ready to forgive"! Am I speaking to some abandoned woman who thinks that she will destroy herself? See thou do it not, for God is ready to forgive. Am I addressing some man who is cast out of society, as a reprobate for whom nobody cares? Soul, give not up hope, for God is ready to forgive. Though thy father hath shut the door against thee, and thy mother and sister shun thee because of thy vices and sins, yet God is ready to forgive thee if thou wilt repent, and turn from thine iniquity. Turn thee, turn

thee, 'tis a brother's voice that entreats thee to turn. By the love with which he pardoned me; by the mercy which made him pass by my innumerable transgressions, I beg thee to turn; nay, more, linking my arm in thine, I say to thee, "Come, and let us return unto the Lord, and let us say unto him, 'Receive us graciously, and love us freely, so will we render unto thee the calves of our lips.'" Ready to perish art thou, but ready to forgive is he, blessed be his holy name!

III. My third text is intended as a hammer to drive home the last nail. This sentence, in Job xvii. 1, is most solemnly true of each one of us: "THE GRAVES ARE READY FOR ME."

About three years ago, I gazed into the eternal world. It then pleased God to stretch me upon a bed of the most agonizing pain, and my life hung in jeopardy, not merely every hour, but every moment. Eternal realities were vivid enough before my eyes; but it pleased God, for some purpose which is known to him, to spare my life, and I went to spend a little season, that I might fully recover, with a beloved friend who seemed then far more likely to live than I was. This day, it is his turn to lie upon the borders of the grave, and mine to stand by his bedside. The grave then seemed ready for me; it now seems ready for him. As I stood talking to him, this afternoon, he said, with greater force than Addison, "See how a Christian can die." When I asked him about his worldly goods and possessions, he said that he had been content to leave them all, some time ago. "And what about your wife and your little ones?" I asked; and he replied, "I have left them all with God." "And how about eternal things?" I enquired. "Oh!" said he, "you know that God's love is everlasting and his grace is unchanging, so why should we fear?" He had no doubt about his acceptance in the Beloved, or about the power of Christ to carry him through his dying moments. When I said, "The battle's fought, the victory's won for ever," I saw his eyes sparkle as though he heard the melodious voice of the great Captain of our salvation saying to him, "Well done; enter into thy rest." I never saw a bride, at her marriage, look more happy than this man upon the eve of death. I never saw a saint more peaceful, when retiring at eventide, than he was when about to undress himself that he might stand before his God. "Ah!" he exclaimed, "remember what you said to me, 'Sudden death, sudden glory!'" and his eyes sparkled again at the prospect of soon beholding his Lord.

"One gentle sigh, the fetter breaks,"—

and thou art gone, O earth, and my soul is in heaven! One gasp, and thou hast melted, O shadowy Time, and I have come to thee, thou welcome substance of Eternity! Blessed be God that the graves are ready for us. Christian men, does the idea of a long life charm you? Do you want to remain long in this prison? Would you cling to these rags of mortality, to this vile body, whose breath is corrupt, whose face is so often marred with weeping, and upon whose eyelids hangs the shadow of death? Would you long

to creep up and down this dunghill world, like some poor worm that ever leaves a slimy track behind it? Or wouldst thou not rather—

> "Stretch thy wings, O soul, and fly
> Straight to yonder world of joy"?

Were we wise, we should—

> "Long for evening, to undress,
> That we might rest with God."

"The graves are ready for me." Young men and young women, and all of you who are here, can you look upon the grave which is ready for you with as much complacency as my friend did this afternoon? O Death, thou dost not need to furbish up thy darts, or whet thy scythe! Thou art always ready to slaughter the sons of men. O Eternity, thy gates need not to be unlocked, and thrown back on their hinges with long and tedious toil, for they are ever on the jar! O world to come, thou dost not need long intervals to make thyself ready to receive the pilgrims who have finished their journey! Thou art an inn whose doors are always open; thou art a harbour whose gates are never closed. Our grave is ready for us. The tree is grown that shall make our coffin; perhaps the fabric that shall make our windingsheet is already woven, and they, who shall carry us to our last home, are ready and waiting for us.

"The graves are ready for us;" are we ready for the graves? Are we prepared to die,—prepared to rise again,—prepared to be judged, —prepared to plead the blood and righteousness of Christ as our ground of acceptance before the eternal throne? What is your answer, my hearer? Do you reply, in the words I quoted at the beginning of my discourse, "Ready, ay, ready"? Didst thou say, Death, that I was wanted? Here I am, for thou didst call me. Didst thou say, O Heaven, that thou needest to receive another blood-bought one? "Ready, ay, ready!" O Christian men, always keep your houses in such good order that you will ever be "Ready, ay, ready!" Always keep your heart in such a state, your soul so near to Christ, and your faith so fully fixed on him, that, if you should drop dead in the street, or some accident should take away your life, you would be able cheerfully to say, "Ready, ay, ready! Ready for thee, O Death; ready to triumph over thee, and to pluck away thy sting! Ready for thee, O Grave, for where is now thy victory? Ready for thee, O Heaven, for, with thy wedding garment on, we are ready, ay, ready!" The Lord make us ready, for Christ's sake! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

MATTHEW VIII. 1—27.

Verse 1, 2. *When he was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him. And, behold, there came a leper—*

You see that particular mention is made of this one special case; and, in any congregation, while it may be recorded that so many people came

together, the special case that will be noted by the recording angel will be that of anyone who comes to Christ with his own personal distresses, and who thereby obtains relief from them: "Behold, there came a leper"—

2, 3. *And worshipped him, saying, Lord if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. And Jesus put forth his hand and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.*

His faith was not as strong as it might have been. There was an "if" in it; but, still, it was genuine faith, and our loving Lord fixed his eye upon the faith rather than upon the flaw that was in it; and if he sees in you, dear friend, even a trembling faith, he will rejoice in it, and bless you because of it. He will not withhold his blessing because you are not as strong in faith as you should be. Probably, you will have a greater blessing if you have greater faith; but even little faith gets great blessings from Christ. The leper said to him, "If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean;" so Christ answered to the faith that he did possess, "and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed."

4—7. *And Jesus saith unto him, See thou tell no man; but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them. And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto him a centurion, beseeching him, and saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented. And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him.*

He had not asked Christ to "come and heal him." He wished his servant to be healed, but he considered that it was too great an honour for Christ to come to him. I am not sure, but I think that this man's judgment is correct,—that, for Christ to come to a man is better than for healing to come to him. Indeed, brethren and sisters, all the gifts of Christ fall far short of himself. If he will but come, and abide with us, that means more than all else that he can bestow upon us.

8, 9. *The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it.*

From his own power over his soldiers and servants, he argued that Christ must have at least equal power over all the forces of nature; and, as a centurion did not need to go and do everything himself, but gave his orders to his servant, and he did it, so, surely, there could be no need for the great Commander, to whom he was speaking, to honour the sick man with his own personal presence. He had simply to utter the command, and it would be obeyed, and the centurion's servant would be healed.

Do you think this is an ingenious argument? It is so, certainly, but it is also a very plain and very forcible one. I have read or heard many ingenious arguments for unbelief, and I have often wished that half the ingenuity thus vainly spent could be exercised in discovering reasons for believing. So, I am pleased to notice that this commander of a hundred Roman soldiers did but argue from his own position, and so wrought in his mind still greater confidence in Christ's power to heal his sick servant. Is there not something about yourself, dear friend, from which, if you would look at it in the right light, you might gather arguments concerning the power of the Lord Jesus Christ?

10. *When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel.*

"Not in Israel,"—where the light and the knowledge were, there was not such faith as this centurion possessed. This Roman soldier, rough by

training and experience, who was more familiar with stern fighting men than with those who could instruct him concerning Christ, had more faith than Jesus had so far found "in Israel."

11, 12. *And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

This is a strange thing, yet it is continually happening still, despite its strangeness, that the persons, who are placed in such positions of privilege, that you naturally expect that they would become believers, remain unbelievers; while others, who are placed at a terrible disadvantage, nevertheless often come right out from sin, and right away from ignorance, and become believers in Christ. Oh, that none of us, who sit under the sound of the gospel from Sabbath to Sabbath, might be sad illustrations of this truth, while others, unaccustomed to listen to the Word, may be happy instances of the way in which the Lord still takes strangers, and adopts them into his family.

13. *And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the selfsame hour.*

Jesus will treat all alike according to this rule: "As thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee." If thou canst believe great things of him, thou shalt receive great things from him. If thou dost think him good, and great, and mighty, thou shalt find him to be so. If thou canst conceive greater things of him than anyone else has ever done, thou shalt find him equal to all thy conceptions, and thy greatest faith shall be surpassed. It is a law of his kingdom, from which Christ never swerves: "According to thy faith, be it unto thee."

14, 15. *And when Jesus was come into Peter's house, he saw his wife's mother laid, and sick of a fever. And he touched her hand, and the fever left her: and she arose, and ministered unto them.*

That was, perhaps, the most remarkable thing of all; for, when a fever is cured, it usually leaves great weakness behind it. Persons recovered of fever cannot immediately leave their bed, and begin at once to attend to household matters; but Peter's wife's mother did this. Learn, hence, that the Lord Jesus can not only take away from us the disease of sin, but all the effects of it as well. He can make the man, who has been worn out in the service of Satan, to become young again in the service of the Lord; and when it seems as if we never, even if converted, could be of any use to him, he can take away the consequences of evil habits, and make us into bright and sanctified believers. What is there that is impossible to him? In the olden time, kings claimed to have the power of healing with a touch. That was a superstition; but this King can do it, all glory to his blessed name! May he lay his gracious hand upon many of you; for, if it could heal before it was pierced, much more can it now heal every sin-stricken soul it touches.

16—18. *When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses. Now when Jesus saw great multitudes about him, he gave commandment to depart unto the other side.*

For he neither loved nor courted popularity, but did his utmost to shun it. It followed him like his shadow, but he always went before it, he never followed it, or sought after it: "When Jesus saw great multitudes about him, he gave commandment to depart unto the other side."

19. *And a certain scribe came, and said unto him, Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.*

How bold he is with his boasting! But Jesus knows that the fastest professors are often just as fast deserters, so he tests him before he takes him into the band of his followers.

20. *And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.*

Christ means,—"Can you follow the Son of man when there is no reward except himself,—not even a place for your head to rest upon, or a home wherein you may find comfort? Can you cleave to him when the lone mountain side shall be the place where he spends whole nights in prayer while the dews fall heavily upon him? Can you follow him then?" This is a test of love which makes many to be "found wanting."

21, 22. *And another of his disciples said unto him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. But Jesus said unto him, Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead.*

It must be Christ first, and father afterwards. We pay no disrespect to our dearest relatives and friends when we put them after Christ; that is their proper place. To put them before Christ, to prefer the creature to the Creator, is to be traitors to the King of kings. Whoever may come next, Christ must be first.

23—26. *And when he was entered into a ship, his disciples followed him. And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but he was asleep. And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish. And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm.*

Probably no calm is so profound as that which follows the tempest of the soul which Jesus stills by his peace-speaking word. The calm of nature, the calm of long-continued prosperity, the calm of an easy temper,—these are all deceitful, and are apt to be broken by sudden and furious tempests. But, after the soul has been rent to its foundations,—after the awful ground-swell, and the Atlantic billows of deep temptation,—when Jesus gives peace, there is "a great calm."

27. *But the men marvelled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!*

We have often marvelled in the same way, but we know that it is not any "manner of man" alone, but that he, who was truly man, was also "very God of very God," the God-man, the man Christ Jesus, the Mediator between God and men.

The February number of "The Sword and the Trowel" contains the second chapter of C. H. Spurgeon's Lecture on Bells and Bell-ringing; the second of Pastor Thomas Spurgeon's "Chats with the Children," and also the outline of his Address at the Watch-night Service, and his verses on the Tabernacle Motto for 1904; another of Pastor J. W. Ewing's "Talks with our Young People on Free Church Principles;" the first portion of a Lecture, by Pastor F. A. Jackson, to the Students of the Pastors' College, on Robert Louis Stevenson; Pastor H. T. Spufford's "Green Pastures;" an account of the Tabernacle Thanksgiving and Annual Church-meeting, and much other interesting matter.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

PRAYER FOUND IN THE HEART.

A Sermon

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C. H. SPURGEON,

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"Therefore hath thy servant found in his heart to pray this prayer unto thee."—2 Samuel vii. 27.

IT is a very blessed thing for a child of God to be anxious to glorify his Heavenly Father, whether his wish is realized or not. The strong desire to magnify God is acceptable to him, and is an indication of spiritual health. It is certain, in the long run, to bring blessing to our own souls; and I have frequently noticed that, when we earnestly desire to do something special for the Lord, he generally does something for us very much of the same kind. David wished to build a house for God. "No," says Jehovah, "thou hast been a man of war, and I will not employ a warrior in spiritual business; but I will build thee a house." So, although David may not build a house for God, it is well that the plan of it is in his heart; and God, in return, builds up his house, and sets his son, and his son's son, upon the throne after him. But, my dear friend, if thou shouldst not find an opportunity to do all that is in thine heart, yet, nevertheless, it is well that it is there. Carry out the project if thou canst; but if thou canst not, it may be that, as thou hast desired to deal with the Lord, so will he really deal with thee. If you have sown sparingly, you shall reap sparingly. If you have sown liberally, you shall reap largely; for, often and often, the Lord's dealings with his own people are a sort of echo to their hearts of their dealings with him.

Sometimes it happens that God will not let his servants do what they would most of all like to do. David had long been storing up gold and silver in great quantities that he might build that house for the Lord. It had been the great project of his life that he might make a fit sanctuary for the ark of the covenant. "I dwell," said he, "in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwelleth within curtains." The dream of his life was that he might build a magnificent temple, which should be supremely gorgeous for architecture, and rich in all the treasures of the ends of the earth, that there the

ark of his God might be appropriately housed. But the Lord would not have it so. David might pray about it, and think about it, and plan about it, and save his money for it; but the Lord would not have it so. It was not in that particular way that David was to serve his God. And I have known some good Christian young men who felt that they must be preachers. They had not the proper gifts and qualifications for the ministry, but they felt that they must preach; so they have striven very hard, but at all points they have met with rebuffs. People, who have heard them once, have been quite satisfied, and have not desired to hear them again. Doors have been shut against them, no conversions have followed their efforts, and thus God has said to each one of them, "Not so, my son; not in that way shalt thou serve me." And there are others, who have had other plans in their heads,—brethren and sisters, who have arranged wonderful schemes and plans, which they have dreamed over, and said, "Thus and thus will we serve God." Yet, hitherto, my brother, you have had to keep to the workman's bench; and you, my sister, have had to keep to nursing those little children. Up till now, you have not been very successful in any special path of usefulness, or that which is commonly thought to be the path of usefulness. But God knows best, and he has uses for all the vessels in his house, and it is not right for any one vessel to say, "I will be used here, or there, or not at all;" but it is for God to use us as he pleases.

Every private soldier would like to be an officer, but it is only a very few who ever will be; and if every private soldier could be an officer, what sort of an army would it be where all were officers, and none were men in the ranks? So we would, perhaps, each of us, like to do something more remarkable than we have hitherto done; but it is for our great Commander to say to this man, "Stand here," or to that man, "Go there;" and it ought to be equally a matter of contentment to us whether God permits us to serve him here or there. I think it was good Mr. Jay who used to say that, if there were two angels in heaven, and God wanted one of them to go and be the ruler of a kingdom, and the other to sweep a crossing, the two angels would not have the slightest choice which post they would have provided that they knew they had the Lord's command to occupy either position. Brother, if ever the Lord should rebuff thee, and seem to refuse that which thou desirest to offer to him, do not sulk; do not get into a bad spirit, as some have done in similar circumstances; but know that the very essence of Christian service is to be willing not to serve in that particular way if, by not serving, God would be the more glorified. Be willing, O vessel in the house of the Lord, to be hung up on a nail in the wall, be willing to be laid aside in a corner, if so God would be glorified, for thus was it with David. God would not let him erect the temple which he wished to build, but he gave him great blessings in return for his desires; and then David, instead of sulking, and saying, "Well, then, as I cannot have my own will, I will do nothing at all," went in, and sat before the Lord, and blessed and praised him, and never uttered one grumbling or surly word, but blessed the

name of the Lord from the beginning of his meditation even to its close. Oh, to have a heart moulded after the like fashion!

In the midst of David's memorable address to God, we meet with this suggestive expression: "Thy servant hath found in his heart to pray this prayer unto thee." I am going to speak upon that subject in this way. First, concerning David's prayer, *how did he come by it?* Secondly, *how came this prayer to be in his heart?* And, thirdly, *how may we get into such a condition that we shall find prayers in our hearts?*

I. First, then, HOW DID DAVID COME BY HIS PRAYER? He tells us that he found it in his heart: "Thy servant hath found in his heart to pray this prayer unto thee."

Then it is pretty clear that *he looked for it in his heart.* How many men seem to begin to pray without really thinking about prayer! They rush, without preparation or thought, into the presence of God. Now, no loyal subject would seek an audience of his sovereign, to present a petition, without having first carefully prepared it; but many seem to think there is no need to look for a prayer, or to find one, when they approach the mercy-seat. They appear to imagine that they have only just to repeat certain words, and to stand or kneel in a certain attitude, and that is prayer. But David did not make that mistake; he found his prayer in his heart. David and his heart were well acquainted; he had long been accustomed to talk with himself. There are some men, who know a thousand other people, but who do not know their own selves; the greatest stranger to them, in the whole world, is their own heart. They have never looked into it, never talked with it, never examined it, never questioned it. They follow its evil devices, but they scarcely know that they have a heart, they so seldom look into it. But David, when he wanted to pray, went and looked in his heart to see what he could find there, and he found in his heart to pray this prayer to God.

This leads me to say, dear friends, that *the best place in which to find a prayer is to find it in your heart.* Some would have fetched down a book, and they would have said, "Let us see; what is the day of the month,—how many Sundays after Advent? This is the proper prayer for to-day." But David did not go to a book for his prayer, he turned to his heart to see what he could find there that he might pray unto God. Others of us would, perhaps, have been content to find a prayer in our heads. We have been accustomed to extemporize in prayer, and so, perhaps, bowing the knee, we should have felt that the stream of supplication would flow because we are so habituated to speaking with God in prayer. Ah, dear friend, it is no worse to find a prayer in a book than to find it in your head! It is very much the same thing whether the prayer be printed or be extemporized; unless it comes from the heart, it is equally dead in either case.

How many, too, have found a prayer upon their lips! It is a very common thing with those who pray in prayer-meetings, and those of us who pray in public, for our lips to run much faster than our hearts move, and it is one of the things we need to cry to God

to keep us from, lest we should be run away with by our own tongues, as men are, sometimes, run away with by their horses, which they cannot restrain; and you know, the horse never goes faster than when he has very little to carry. And, sometimes, words will come at a very rapid rate when there is very little real prayer conveyed by them. This is not as it ought to be with us, and we must look into our hearts for the desire to pray, and if we do not find it in our hearts to pray a prayer, let us rest assured that we shall not be accepted before the throne of God.

How was it that David found this prayer in his heart? I think it was *because his heart had been renewed by divine grace.* Prayer is a living thing; you cannot find a living prayer in a dead heart. Why seek ye the living among the dead, or search the sepulchre to find the signs and tokens of life? No, sir, if you have not been made alive by the grace of God, you cannot pray. The dead cannot pray, and the spiritually dead cannot pray; but the moment you begin to pray, it is a sign that life has been given to you. Ananias knew that Saul was a living soul when God said to him, "Behold, he prayeth." "It is all right," said Ananias; "for the Lord must have quickened his heart." David found this prayer in his heart because his was a living heart.

And he found it there, also, *because his was a believing heart.* How can a man pray if he does not believe in God, or if he merely thinks that there may be a supernatural Being, somewhere or other in the universe, but that he is not within hail,—and cannot be made to hear,—or is not a living personality, or, if he is, he is too great to care about us, or to listen to the words of a man. But, when the Lord has taught you the truth about his own existence, and his real character, when he has come so near to you that you know that he is the Rewarder of them that diligently seek him, then, in that believing heart of yours prayer will spring up as the corn springs up in the furrows of the field. The Lord, who has sown in your heart the seed of faith, will make that seed to spring up in the green blade of prayer. It must be so; but, until you do believe in God, you cannot pray. It would be useless for me to say to some men, "You should pray," when I recollect that Christ has said, "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth;" and that is what these men cannot do. How can they, therefore, pray acceptably? "He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Where there is that true faith in God, there is fervent prayer in the heart; but nowhere else.

David's was also *a serious heart.* Some men's hearts are flippant, trifling, full of levity. God forbid that we should condemn holy cheerfulness! As oil to the wheels of a machine, so is cheerfulness to a man's conversation; but there is a frothiness, a superficiality, a frivolity, which is far too common. Some men do not seem to think seriously about anything. They have no settled principles; they are "everything by starts, and nothing long." "The Vicar of Bray" is their first cousin. Perhaps they have scarcely as much principle as he had, for they do not so steadily seek their own interests, and

scarcely seek any interest at all but that of the transient pleasure of the hour. If that is your case, I do not wonder that you cannot pray. A man says, "I cannot find prayer in my heart." No, how should you? Yours is a heart full of chaff, full of dust, full of rubbish,—a heart tangled and overgrown with weeds,—a sluggard's heart, where grow the nettles of evil desire and unholy passion,—where live the docks and thistles of idleness and neglect. Oh, may God grant us the grace to have serious hearts,—hearts that are in solemn earnest,—hearts that are intense,—hearts that can really give due heed to things according to their merits, and that give to eternal things their chief concern, because eternal things deserve them best. David's heart was a serious heart; and, therefore, he found this prayer in it.

And, once again, David's was *a humble heart*, for a man who is proud will not pray. A man who is self-righteous will not pray, except it be in the fashion of the Pharisee, and that was no prayer at all. But a man, humbly conscious of his soul's needs, and realizing the guilt of his sins,—that is the man to pour out his heart in prayer before the living God. I pray the Lord graciously to break your hearts; for, unless our hearts are broken in penitence, we shall never find in them a real prayer unto God.

There are some of you who have got on wonderfully since your Lord called you by his grace. You were wretched enough when he looked at you, cast out in the open field, covered with blood and filthiness; and he washed you, and clothed you, and nourished you, and now he has even begun to use you in his service, and you are already beginning to be rather proud that he has given you some success. I charge you, brothers and sisters, not to pilfer any of the glory that belongs to God alone. Never begin to throw up your caps, and to cry, "Well done!" It is all up with us if we do that. Keep down low, my brother; keep down low, my sister. The lower we keep, and the more we fear and tremble,—not through unbelief, mark you, (that kind of fear I denounce with all my heart,) but with that really believing trembling and believing fear that grows out of genuine love to Christ, and is not inconsistent with that love,—the more we have of that sort of fear, the more securely shall we walk, and the more will it be safe for God to trust us with his goodness. When your ship floats very high upon the water, I hope that you will not have much sail spread, or else the vessel will almost certainly go over; but when it floats low, almost down to the Plimsoll line, you may crowd on as much sail as you like. If you carry but little ballast, and you have huge sails up aloft, the first gust of wind will topple you over; but if you are well ballasted,—that is to say, if you are weighed down with a sense of your own unworthiness, you will weather any gale that may come upon you, God the Holy Ghost being in the vessel with you, and holding the helm.

I pause here a moment just to ask each one,—Do you pray? Do you present to God prayers that come from your heart? I do not ask whether you use a form of prayer, or not; but does your heart really go with the prayer you offer? I think I hear someone say,

"I always say my prayers." Ah, my dear friend, there is as great a difference between saying prayers and really praying as there was between the dead child and the living one that were brought before Solomon! Saying prayers is not praying. Why, you might as well say your prayers backward as forward unless your heart goes with them! It is quite extraordinary how some people can use a form of prayer without any thought whatever as to its meaning. Some time ago, a man, seventy years of age, was asked if he prayed; he replied that he always had prayed, and he would tell the enquirer the prayer he used. It turned out that he still persisted in repeating what his mother taught him when he was a child, "Pray, God, bless father and mother, and make me a good boy." He had got those words so deeply engraven upon his memory that he still kept to them at his advanced age. Naturally, you smile at the story; yet it is very pitiful. It may be an extreme instance, but still it is a clear instance of what I mean,—that there is a way of merely saying prayers which is rather a mockery of God than a real approach to him such as he desires.

"Well," saith one, "I never pray." I question the truth of that assertion; but if it is true, there is another thing that I do know, and that is this, the time will come when you will want to pray. Let me explain what I mean when I say that I question your assertion about never praying. I have heard men pray who would have thought themselves insulted if they had been told that they did. What awful prayers they have presented to God when they have imprecated upon their souls, and bodies, and eyes, and limbs, and children, and everything else, the most terrible curses from God! There are some men who will do this at the least provocation. O sirs, mind that God does not grant you your wicked requests! I am afraid that, when an ungodly man prays in that shameless way, he does find his prayer in his heart; and I am also afraid that his heart must be full of damnation, or he would not find so many oaths in it; for that which comes out of a man is what is in him, and when you hear a man swear, you know that there is a deal of "swear" in his heart, for the language in which he dares to imprecate God's vengeance proves how alienated his heart must be from God.

I would remind you, who do not pray, that you will want to pray one day. If there were to be a pledge exacted from you that you never would pray to God,—if you were offered money never to pray, suppose you took the money, and promised never to pray,—I know what you would think; you would say to yourself, "What shall I do with this money? It is the price of my soul's salvation." It would strike you at once that it was an awful thing never to be allowed to pray, and you would feel that you had sold yourself to the devil, body and soul, and you would be in dire trouble. Well, but, as you say that you never pray, you might as well take the money that is offered to you. As you do not pray, I do not see what use the privilege of prayer is to you. "If it be of any use to pray to God," say you, "I shall pray at the last." Then pray now, for you never know what may be your last moment. Who knows

how close you may be to your grave even while you are sitting in your pew? You saw one friend faint, just now; and we have seen hearers fall back dead even while gathered in the congregation. God grant that we may not see it again! Still, the fact that it has happened is a loud call to all of us bidding us begin to pray.

Thus I have shown you where David found his prayer; he found it in his heart.

II. Now, secondly, HOW CAME DAVID'S PRAYER TO BE IN HIS HEART? I answer that he found it in his heart *because the Lord put it there.* Every true heart-prayer, that is accepted of God, first came from God. The Lord Jesus passed by David's heart, and threw this prayer in at the window; and then, when the good man went down to look for a prayer, he found this prayer lying on the floor of his heart ready for him to use.

How does God put prayers into a man's heart? I answer, first, *he instructs us how to pray.* We none of us know how to pray aright till we have been to school to the Holy Spirit. We know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit comes, and shows us our need. Thus we see what to pray for. He also shows us what Christ has provided for us, and thus we see what we may hope to obtain. He shows us, too, that the way to God is through the precious blood of Jesus, and he leads us along that crimson, blood-besprinkled road, and so, by his instruction, he puts the prayer into our hearts.

In the next place, he puts it there *by inclining us to pray.* Benjamin Beddome wrote,—

> "When God inclines the heart to pray,
> He hath an ear to hear;"—

and his short hymn contains a great truth. God does bend the heart to pray; and, oftentimes, he does this by filling us with sorrow; and, then, in the day of our distress, we cry unto him. But I have also known him do it in the sweeter way, as he did with David, by filling the heart with joy till we have been so glad and grateful that we have felt that we must pray, as David did, on another occasion, when he said, "Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live."

So, the Lord puts prayer into our heart by instructing us how to pray and by inclining us to pray.

Then he puts prayer into the heart *by encouragement.* You notice that my text begins with "Therefore." "Therefore hath thy servant found in his heart to pray this prayer unto thee." What does David mean by that "therefore"? Why, God had promised to do great things for him; and, my brother or sister, you may always safely ask for that which God has promised to give. When he gives you the promise of anything, he does as good as say to you, "Come, my child, ask for this; be not slow to come to me with your requests." If the Lord has said that he will bestow any blessing, what greater encouragement to pray can you possibly desire? But this promise, according to the Hebrew, had been given to David in a very special manner. In our version, it is rendered, "Thou hast revealed to thy

servant;" but the marginal reading is, "Thou hast opened the ear of thy servant." A promise in the Bible is, often, a promise to a deaf ear; but the promise, applied by the Spirit of God, goes right through the outer organ, and penetrates to the ear of the soul. I am sure, dear friends, that you can never be backward in prayer when God opens your ear, and puts a promise into it. The richness, the sweetness, the sureness, the preciousness of the promise, when the Holy Spirit seals it home to the heart, makes a man go to his knees, he cannot help doing so; and thus, the Lord greatly encourages the needy soul to pray.

I will not keep you longer upon this point when I have just said that I believe God puts prayers into our hearts *by a sense of his general goodness.* We see how kind and good he is to the sons of men as a whole; and, therefore, we pray to him. By his special goodness to his own chosen people, we see still more of his compassion and tenderness, and so we are moved to pray to him. Especially does he put prayer into our hearts when he gives us a sight of the cross. We see there how greatly Jesus loved us, and, therefore, we pray. We rightly argue that he, who gave Jesus for us, will deny to us nothing that is for our good; and, therefore, again we pray. Often are we stirred up to pray by the recollection of former answers to prayer, and sometimes by observing how God hears other men and other women pray. Anyhow, it is a blessed thing when the Lord comes by, and scatters the seeds of prayer in our hearts, so that, when we want to pray, we have only to look within our own renewed nature and there we find the prayer that we shall do well to pray unto God.

III. Our last question, upon which I must speak but briefly, is this. WHAT MUST YOU AND I DO IN ORDER TO BE ABLE TO FIND PRAYERS IN OUR HEARTS?

Ah, dear friends, I am afraid that *some of you can do nothing in this matter until, first of all, your hearts are renewed by grace.* "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" No one. And who can fetch an acceptable prayer out of an unaccepted person? No one. So, sinner, thou must first come to Jesus, confessing thy sin, and looking to his dear wounds, and finding a broken heart within thee as the result of his pierced heart; and when the Lord has looked upon you in his pardoning love, then you will find many prayers in your heart.

I asked a young friend, "Did you pray before conversion?" She answered that she did pray "after a sort." I then enquired, "What is the difference between your present prayers and those you offered before you knew the Lord?" Her answer was, "Then, I said my prayers; but, now, I mean them. Then, I said the prayers which other people taught me; but, now, I find them in my heart." There is good reason to cry "Eureka!" when we find prayer in our heart. Holy Bradford would never cease praying or praising till he found his heart thoroughly engaged in the holy exercise. If it be not in my heart to pray, I must pray till it is. But, oh, the delight of pleading with God when the heart casts forth mighty jets of supplication, like a geyser in full action! How mighty is supplication

when the whole soul becomes one living, hungering, expecting desire!

But some Christian people often feel as if they could not pray; they get into a condition in which they are not able to pray, and that is a very sad state for any child of God to be in. How much do I personally desire ever to possess the true spirit of prayer! When I was at Mr. Rowland Hill's house at Wotton-under-Edge, many years ago, I asked, "Where did Mr. Hill use to pray?" And the answer of someone, who had known him when he was there, was, "He used to pray everywhere." I said, "Yes; but did he not have a special place for prayer?" The reply was, "I do not know; I never saw him when he was not praying." "Well, but," I asked, "did he not study somewhere?" I was told that he was always studying, wherever he went, yet that he was always in the spirit of prayer. The good old man, at last, had got into such a blessed state of mind that, when he sat down on the sofa, he would be going over a familiar hymn; and when he walked in the garden, he would be to-tooting something gracious. You know how they found him, in George Clayton's chapel over yonder. His carriage had not come, after the service, and he was walking up and down the aisles, softly singing to himself,—

> "And when I'm to die, 'Receive me,' I'll cry;
> For Jesus hath loved me, I cannot tell why;
> But this I do find, we two are so joined,
> He'll not be in glory, and leave me behind."

Good old soul! he had got to find it in his heart to pray always. He used to wander down the Blackfriars Road, with his hands under his coat tails, and stop to look in very nearly every shop-window; but, all the while, he was talking with God just as much as any man could have done who had shut himself up in a cloister. This is a blessed state of mind to be in,—to find as many prayers in your soul as there are hairs on your head; to pray as often as the clock ticks; to wake up in the night, and feel that you have been dreaming prayers; and when you rise in the morning, to find that your first thought is either that of praising God for his many mercies, or else pleading for somebody or other who needs your prayers.

How are you to get into this state? Well, I cannot tell you, except this; live near to God. If you live near to God, you must pray. He that learns how to live near to God will learn how to pray, and to give thanks to God. Look into your hearts, also, as David did. You cannot find prayer there if you do not look for it. Think much of your own needs, for a realization of how many and how great they are will make you pray. When you see the falls of others, recollect that you also will fall unless God holds you up; so make that a reason and subject for prayer. When you see others, who are slack in devotion, or who have become cold in heart, remember you will be as they are if grace does not prevent. So, let your own needs drive you to prayer.

Then read the Scriptures very much; study them; suck the sweetness out of them, for they are sweeter than honey and the honeycomb. You cannot fail to be much in prayer if you spend

much time in the reading of the Word. If you will let God speak to you, I am sure you will be constrained to speak with God. Dwell much upon the doctrines of the gospel; seek to understand them; live upon them, and upon the promises, too. It is a blessed temptation to find one of God's precious promises, for you feel then as if you were tempted to pray, so as to plead it. If a man were to give me a cheque, I do not think I should be so foolish as not to cash it; and if God gives me a promise, which is better than any man's cheque, the most natural thing is for me to go on my knees to heaven's bank to seek to have it changed,—to get the blessing God really promised he would give me. So, keep hard by the promises, and closer still to the faithful Promiser. Live to God; live for God; live in God; and you will find prayers come out of your soul as sparks come out of the chimney of the blacksmith's smithy. If there is a blazing fire within, and the bellows blowing it up, and the smith is hard at work in his calling, the sparks will fly. And in this cold weather, dear brethren, it is necessary to keep our hearts warm. Have you noticed thatched cottages, and other houses where the snow lies on the roof? You say, "Yes." But have you noticed, where there is a good fire in the house, anywhere near the roof, how soon the snow is melted? And if you want to get warm, and keep warm, in the midst of a cold, graceless world, that chills the very marrow in a believer's bones, keep a warm heart inside, for that will tend to make it warm outside too. God grant you this blessing, and keep you ever abounding in prayer; and he shall have all the praise.

I do trust that some, who never prayed before, will try to pray. Nobody ever sneers at prayer but the man who does not pray, and nobody ever denies its efficacy but the man who knows nothing at all about it. And such men are out of court, and have no right to speak upon this matter. But men who are honest in other things, and who would be believed in a court of law, should be believed when they bear their solemn testimony that, times without number, God has heard their prayers. Try it, friend. God help thee to try it! Especially begin by believing in Jesus, and then shalt thou rightly seek unto the Almighty, and he will be found of thee. Yea, thou shalt lift up thine eyes to heaven, and the Lord will look down upon thee, and accept thee, and bless thee, both now and for ever. So may it be, for his dear Son's sake! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

2 SAMUEL VII. 18—29; AND LUKE XVIII. 1—14.

2 Samuel vii. Verse 18. *Then went king David in, and sat before the* LORD,—

David desired to build a temple for God, and the prophet Nathan, conceiving that such a design must be acceptable to the Most High, told the king to proceed with it; but God's mind was otherwise, and Nathan had to tell David that it was well that it was in his heart, but that God intended the temple to be built, not by him, but by his son Solomon. However, the Lord gave to David very large promises, and when he had received them, through Nathan, he was so overcome with gratitude that he

went in, and "sat before the Lord." That was his posture in prayer on this occasion. Good men have been known to pray kneeling, which seems to be the most natural attitude. Some have prayed with their faces between their knees, as Elias did. Some have prayed standing, as the publican did. Some have prayed sitting, as David did. Probably, he was mingling prayer and meditation when he "sat before the Lord,"—

18. *And he said, Who am I, O Lord* GOD*? and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?*

How often has a similar feeling leaped into our heart! Why should the Lord have dealt so well with us?

"What was there in you that could merit esteem,
Or give the Creator delight?"

19. *And this was yet a small thing in thy sight, O Lord* GOD*; but thou hast spoken also of thy servant's house for a great while to come. And is this the manner of man, O Lord* GOD*?*

No; man could not have been so kind as that. The love of Jesus surpasses the love of women, and the love of God surpasses all the kindness of men.

20. *And what can David say more unto thee? for thou, Lord* GOD*, knowest thy servant.*

"What I cannot utter, thou canst perceive in my heart, though I cannot express it."

21—25. *For thy word's sake, and according to thine own heart, hast thou done all these great things, to make thy servant know them. Wherefore thou art great, O* LORD *God: for there is none like thee, neither is there any God beside thee, according to all that we have heard with our ears. And what one nation in the earth is like thy people, even like Israel, whom God went to redeem for a people to himself, and to make him a name, and to do for you great things and terrible, for thy land, before thy people, which thou redeemedst to thee from Egypt, from the nations and their gods? For thou hast confirmed to thyself thy people Israel to be a people unto thee for ever: and thou,* LORD*, art become their God. And now, O* LORD *God, the word that thou hast spoken concerning thy servant, and concerning his house, establish it for ever, and do as thou hast said.*

That is a very short, but exceedingly pithy prayer: "Do as thou hast said." You do not need any larger promises, brethren, than the Lord has already given to you: could he give you any larger ones?

"What more can he say than to you he hath said,
You who unto Jesus for refuge have fled?"

What you have to do is to take the promises he has given, and spread them out before the mercy-seat, and then say to him, "Do as thou hast said." What strength there is in this plea! "Hath he said, and shall he not do it?" Will he break his promise, or shall his right hand fail to perform that which has gone forth from his lips? Far be it from us to think so, but let us say to him, "Do as thou hast said." That is the very essence of prayer. Take care not to forget it.

26—29. *And let thy name be magnified for ever, saying, The* LORD *of hosts is the God over Israel: and let the house of thy servant David be established before thee. For thou, O* LORD *of hosts, God of Israel, hast revealed to thy servant, saying, I will build thee an house: therefore hath thy servant found in his heart to pray this prayer unto thee. And now, O Lord* GOD*, thou art that God, and thy words be true, and thou hast promised this goodness unto thy servant: therefore now let it please thee to bless the house of thy servant, that it may continue for ever before thee:*

You see how he clings to God's promise: "Thou hast promised this

goodness unto thy servant." If you get a promise from the Lord, and cling to it as you wrestle with the angel, you will surely prevail. You must win the blessing if you can plead, as David did, "Thou hast promised this goodness unto thy servant."

29. *For thou, O Lord GOD, hast spoken it:*

How he dwells on it!

29. *And with thy blessing let the house of thy servant be blessed for ever.*

Now let us read two of our Lord's parables concerning prayer.

Luke xviii. Verses 1—8. *And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint; saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man: and there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?*

The whole force of this parable goes to show the prevalence of importunity. If you cannot get your desire of God the first time, go again, and, if need be, go again seven times. Yea, if need be, in submission to his will, go seventy times seven. I am afraid there is no fear of our having to be asked the question, "Will ye weary my God also?" Oh, no! we do not pray enough for that, neither are we so importunate as this poor widow was. Let us prove the power of importunate prayer, and rest assured that heaven's gate must open if we do but know how to knock, and that the blessing must be given if we do but continue to ask for it, for praying breath is never spent in vain.

9—11. *And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.*

And he drew up his skirts, and got to windward, for fear lest any breath that should blow from the publican should defile his sanctified person.

12. *I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.*

It was not a prayer at all, as you perceive. It was a thanksgiving; but the thanksgiving was merely a veil for self-adulation.

13. *And the publican, standing afar off,—*

Not daring to come near to the inner shrine,—

13. *Would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.*

I do not suppose that he thought he had really prayed; he scarcely dared to call it prayer. Perhaps, as he went home, he said, "I went up to the temple to pray, but I was so bowed down with a sense of my guilt that I could not pray." But that was not our Lord's verdict:—

14. *I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.*

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—992, 996, 229.

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REVELATION AND CONVERSION.

A Sermon

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C. H. SPURGEON,

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"The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul."—Psalm xix. 7.

WHEN he spoke of "the law of the Lord", David did not merely mean the law as it was given in the ten commandments, although that also is perfect, and is used, to some extent, in the conversion of souls. The term includes the entire doctrine of God,—the whole divine revelation; and though, in David's day, there was not so full and clear a revelation as we have,—for the New Testament was not then given, nor much of the Old Testament, yet the text has lost none of its former force, but has rather gained more; so I shall use it as applicable to the entire Scriptures,—to the law and to the gospel, and to all that God has revealed; and speaking of it in that sense, I may truly say that it is perfect, and that it converts the soul.

A tree is known by its fruit, and a book must be tested by its effects. There are some books which bear their fruit for the hangman and the jail; and such books are very widely spread nowadays. They are frequently embellished with engravings, and put into the hands of boys and girls, and a crop of criminals is constantly the result of their publication and circulation. There have been books written which have spread moral contagion throughout centuries. I need not mention them; but if it were possible to gather them all together in one heap, and burn them as the Ephesians burnt their books of magic, it would be one of the greatest blessings conceivable. Yet, if that were done, I fear that other wicked brains would be set to work to think out similar blasphemies, and that other hands would be found to scatter their vile productions.

The Word of God must be tested, like other books, by the effect which it produces; and I am going to speak upon one of its effects to which many of us here present can bear personal witness. The old proverb says, "Speak as you find;" and I am going to speak of the

Bible as I have found it,—to praise the bridge that has carried me over every difficulty until now, and that has carried a great many of you over also. We know that the law of the Lord is good because it converts the soul; and, to our mind, the best proof of its purity and power is that it has converted our soul.

My first object will be to show *how the Word of God converts the soul;* then to show *the excellence of the work of conversion;* and, therefore, thirdly, *the excellence of that Book which produces conversion.*

I. First, then, I am to show HOW THE WORD OF GOD CONVERTS THE SOUL.

Man's face is turned away from his Maker. Ever since the fatal day when our first parents broke the law of God, we have been, all of us, guilty of the same great crime. We stand as men who have their backs to the light, and we are going the downward road, the road which leads to destruction. What we need is to be turned round, for that is the meaning of the word "converted"—turned right about. We need to hear the command, "Right about face," and to march in the opposite direction from any in which we have ever marched before. Our text truly says that the Word of God turns us round. It does not mean that the Word alone does that apart from the Spirit of God, because a man may read the Bible through fifty times, and, for fifty years, hear sermons that have all come out of the Bible, and yet they will never turn him unless the Spirit of God makes use of the Word of God or the preacher's sermons. But when the Spirit of God goes with the Word, then the Word becomes the instrument of the conversion of the souls of men.

This is how the work of conversion is wrought. First, *it is by the Scriptures of truth that men are made to see that they are in error.* There are millions upon millions of men, in the world, who are going the wrong way, yet they do not know it; and there are tens of thousands, who believe that they are even doing God service, when they are utterly opposing him. Some who, as far as it is in their power, are even slaying Christ, know not what they are doing. One of the pleas that our Saviour used upon the cross was, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." To take my own case, I know that, for years, I was not conscious of having committed any great sin. I had been, by God's restraining grace, kept from outward immoralities, and from gross transgressions, and therefore I thought I was all right. Did I not pray? Did I not attend a place of worship? Did I not do what was right towards my fellowmen? Did I not, even as a child, have a tender conscience? It seemed to me, for a time, that all was well; and, perhaps, I am addressing someone else who says, "Well, if I am not right, I wonder who is; and if I have gone wrong, where must my neighbours be going?" Ah, that is often the way we talk! As long as we are blind, we can see no faults in ourselves; but when the Spirit of God comes to us, and reveals to us the law of God, then we perceive that we have broken the whole of the ten commandments, in the spirit, if not in the letter of them. Even the chastest of men may well tremble when they remember that searching word of Christ,

"Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." When you understand that the commandments of God not only forbid wrong actions, but also the desires, and imaginations, and thoughts of the heart, and that, consequently, a man may commit murder while he lies in his bed,—may rob his neighbour without touching a penny of his money or any of his goods,—may blaspheme God though he never uttered an oath, and may break all the commands of the law, from the first to the last, before he has put on his garments in the morning;—when you come to examine your life in that light, you will see that you are in a very different condition than you thought you were in. Think, for instance, of that solemn declaration of our Lord, "I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment." It is by bringing home to the heart such truths as these that the Spirit of God, through the Word, makes a man see that he is in error, and in danger; and this is the beginning of his conversion. You cannot turn a man round as long as he believes he is going in the right way. While he has that idea in his head, he goes straight on, marching, as he supposes, safely; so the very first thing to be done to him is to let him see that there is a terrible precipice right before him, over which he will fall if he goes on as he is going. When he realizes that, he stops, and considers his position.

Then the Word of God comes in, in the next place, *to take the man off from all attempts to get round by wrong ways.* When a man knows that he is going wrong, his instinct should lead him to seek to get right; but, unhappily, many people try to get right by getting wrong in another direction. A good man sent me a volume of his poems, the other day. As soon as I looked into it, I saw that there was one line of the verse that was too short, and the good brother evidently felt that it was, so he tried to set the matter right by making the next line too long, which, as you see at once, made two faults instead of one. In like manner, you will find that men, who are wrong in one direction with regard to their fellow-men, often become very superstitious, and go a great deal further in other directions than God asks them to go, and so, practically, make a long line towards God in order to make up for the short line towards men, and thus they commit two errors instead of one. Here is a sheep that has gone astray; it has wandered so far to the East that, in order to get right, it tries to go just as far to the West; and if convinced that it is in the wrong road, all it does is to stray just as far to the North; and, by-and-by, to the South. It is wandering all the while in a different way, with the intent to get back to the fold; and, in this respect, sinners are just as silly as the sheep. Now, the Word of God tells a man that, by the works of the law, he cannot be justified; it tells him that his heart is defiled, that he himself is condemned already, that he is shut up under condemnation for having broken God's law, and indicates to him that, whatever he may do, or however much he may struggle, if he does not seek salvation in God's way, he will only make the bad worse, and be like a drowning man who sinks the faster the more he struggles. When the Word of God

shows a man that, and makes him feel as though he were hopeless, helpless, shut up in the condemned cell, it has done a great deal towards turning him round.

The next thing the Word of God does is *to show the man how he might get right.* And, oh, how perfectly it shows him this! It comes to the man, and says to him, "Your sin deserves punishment. God has laid that punishment upon his only-begotten Son; and, therefore, he is ready to forgive you freely for Christ's sake, not because of anything good in you, or anything you ever can do, but entirely of his free mercy. He bids you trust yourself in the hands of Jesus that he may save you." Come, then, and rely upon what Christ has done, and is still doing for you, and believe in the mercy of God, in Christ Jesus, to all who trust him. Oh, how clearly the Word of God sets Christ before us! It is a sort of mirror in which he is revealed. Christ himself is up in heaven, and a poor sinner, down here on earth, cannot see him however long he looks; but this Word of the Lord is like a huge looking-glass, better even than Solomon's molten sea; and Jesus Christ looks down into this mirror, and then, if you and I come and look into it, we can see the reflection of his face. Blessed be his holy name, it is true, as Dr. Watts sings,—

> "Here I behold my Saviour's face
> Almost in every page."

There is scarcely one chapter in which Christ is not, more or less clearly, set forth as the Saviour of sinners. So the Word of God, you see, shows the man that he is in the wrong, takes him away from wrong ways of trying to get right, and then puts him in the way to get right, namely, by believing in Jesus.

But the Word of the Lord does more than that. In the power of the Holy Spirit, *it helps the man to believe;* for, at the first, he is quite staggered at the idea of free salvation,—instantaneous pardon, —the blotting out of sin all for nothing,—pardon for the worst and vilest freely given, and given now. The man says, "Surely, it is too good to be true." He is filled with amazement, for God's thoughts are as high above him, and as far out of his reach, as the heavens are above the earth. Then the Word comes to him, and says, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." The Word also says to him, "All manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." The Word says, "The mercy of the Lord endureth for ever." "He delighteth in mercy." "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins." I need not go on repeating the texts with which I hope many of you have long been familiar. There is a great number of them,—precious promises, gracious invitations, and comforting doctrines; and, as the sinner reads them, with trembling gaze, the Spirit of God applies them to his soul, and he says, "I can and I do believe in Jesus. Lord, I do gladly accept thy pardoning mercy. I look unto him who was nailed to the cross, and I find in him the cure for the serpent-bites of sin. I do and I

will believe in Jesus, and venture my soul upon him." It is thus that the Word of God converts the soul, by helping the man to believe in Jesus.

And when it has done that, *the man is converted;* for when a man looks to Christ alone, he has turned his face towards God. Now, he has confidence in God, and out of this grows love to God, and now he desires to please God because God has been so very gracious in providing such a Saviour for him. The man is turned right round; from rebelling against God, he has come to feel intense gratitude to his Redeemer, and he seeks to live to God's glory as he would never have thought of doing before.

I ask you, who are the people of God, whether you have not felt, since your conversion, the power of the Word of God *in sustaining you in your converted condition.* Do you not often feel, as you hear the gospel preached, your heart grow warm within you? Some time ago, when I went away for a week's holiday, I was more than a little troubled about many things. I had been, for a long while, preaching to others, and I thought I should like to feel the power of the Word in hearing it myself. I went to a little chapel in the country, and there I heard a lay brother—I think he must have been an engineer—preach a sermon. There was nothing very grand in it, except that it was full of Christ; and as I listened to it, my tears began to flow. I wish that, sometimes, some of you, my brethren, would preach, and let me take my turn at listening. Well, on that occasion, my soul was melted as I heard the gospel proclaimed very simply, and I thought, "After all, I do feel its power; I do enjoy its sweetness;" for, while I listened to it, my heart overflowed with joy and delight, and I could only sit still and weep as I heard the simple story of the cross.

And have not you, beloved, often found it so, in your experience, as you have been reading the Word of the Lord? If you ever get dull in the things of God, it is not the Bible that has made you so. If ever your heart grows cold, it is not the promises of God that have made you cold. If ever you cannot sing, and cannot pray, it is not the searching of the Scriptures that has brought you into that condition; and if you ever have the misery of hearing a sermon that deadens your spiritual life, I am quite certain that that sermon is not in harmony with the mind of God, and not according to the teaching of the Word of God. But when you hear the gospel fully and faithfully preached, if your heart is at all capable of feeling its power, it stirs your spirit, it wakes you up, it produces holy emotions, —love to God, love to your fellow-men, heart-searching, deep humiliation, ardent zeal, and all the Christian graces in full exercise. The Word of the Lord is perfect, and its effect is continually to restore and revive the soul of the Christian.

This has been to me one of the great evidences of the truth of inspiration. Standing alone at night, and looking up to the starry vault of heaven, I have asked myself, "Is this gospel, which I have believed, which I have preached to others for so many years, really true?" Being absolutely certain that there is a God,—for none but a fool can doubt that,—I have said, "Well, this gospel has made

me love God. I know I love him with all my heart and soul. And whenever it exerts its rightful power over me, it makes me try to please him. Whenever I am under its influence, it makes me hate all wrong, and all meanness, and all falseness. Now, it would be a very strange thing if a lie could lead a man to act like that, so it must be true." The moral effect of the Word of God upon one's own nature, from day to day, becomes, in the absence of all other proof,—even if we had no other,—the surest and best evidence to a man that "the law of the Lord is perfect," for it converts his soul.

I once heard a charming story of Robert Hall,—that mightiest of our Baptist orators,—perhaps one of the greatest and most eloquent ministers who ever lived. He was subject to fits of terrible depression of spirits; and, one night, he had been snowed up, on his way to a certain place where he was going to preach. There was such a great depth of snow that he was obliged to stay for the night at the farmhouse where he had stopped. But he must preach, he said, he had got his discourse ready, and he must deliver it; so they fetched in the servants, and the farm people, and he preached the sermon he had prepared,—a very wonderful one to be delivered in a farm-house parlour; and after the others had all gone, he sat down by the fireside with the good man of the house, and he said to him,—a plain, country farmer, "Now tell me, Mr. So-and-so, what do you think is the sure evidence of a man being a child of God, for I sometimes am afraid I am not one?" "Oh!" said the farmer, "my dear Mr. Hall, how can you talk like that?" "Well, what do you think is the best evidence that a man is really a child of God?" "Oh!" replied the farmer, "I feel sure that, if a man loves God, it must be all right with him." "Then," said the farmer, as he told the story, "you should have heard him speak. He said, 'Love God, sir? Love God? If I were damned, I would still love him; he is such a blessed Being,—so holy, so true, so gracious, so kind, so just!' He went on for an hour, praising God, the tears running down his cheeks as he kept on saying, 'Love him! I cannot help loving him; I must love him. Whatever he does to me, I must love him.'" Well, now, I have felt just like that sometimes, and then I have said to myself, "What made me love the Lord thus? Why, this that I have read about him in this blessed Book; and this that I believe that he has done for me, in the person of his dear Son; and that which brings me into such a state that I love him with all my nature, must be a right and a true thing."

The Word of God is perfect, converting the soul. You will find it to be so the longer you live, and the more you test and try it. Whenever you go astray, it is because you get away from the Word of God; and as long as you are kept right, it is because you are drinking in the precious truth concerning Jesus as it is revealed in the Bible. That is the one perfect Book in the world, and it will make you also perfect if you will yield to its gracious influence. Only submit yourself to it, and you will, one day, become perfect, and be taken up to dwell where the perfect God, who wrote the perfect Book, will reveal to you the perfection of bliss for ever and for evermore. God grant to you, dear brethren and sisters, to know the

power of this converting Book! If any of you have backslidden, I pray that this same blessed Book may bring you back. I had a letter, the other day, from the backwoods of America, that did my heart good. It was from a man, who was one of my first converts at New Park Street Chapel. He had been for years a member of the church, but he grew cold, and ceased to attend the means of grace; and, at last, he had to be excommunicated from the church. He went out to America; and there, far away, he began to examine himself, and the Spirit of God brought home to his heart the old texts which he used to hear. He writes that he was brought to his knees, and now he is actively engaged in the service of God, endeavouring to bring other backsliders and sinners to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the Word of God that will restore you, backslider; I hope it will do so this very hour, and that, soon, you will come to us, and say, "Take me into the church again, for the Lord has restored me to fellowship with him through his blessed Word."

II. I must be very brief upon the second part of my subject, which is, THE EXCELLENCE OF THIS WORK OF CONVERSION. That is a boundless theme, but I must be content just to touch upon a few points of this excellence.

When the Word of God converts a man, *it takes away from him his despair, but it does not take from him his repentance.* He does not think now that his sin will cast him into hell, but he does not therefore think that his sin is a trifle. He hates the sin as much as if he feared that it would destroy him for ever. That is a grand kind of conversion,—that the man, who had been in despair because of his sin, is made to know that his sin is forgiven, and yet he is not led to trifle or tamper with sin. By faith, he sees the wounds of Jesus, and he knows how Christ bled to set him free from the bondage of sin, and that makes him for ever hate sin. Is not that an excellent conversion?

True conversion also *gives a man pardon, but does not make him presumptuous.* His past transgression is all forgiven him, but he does not, therefore, say, "I will go, and transgress in the same fashion again. If pardon be so easily obtained, why should I not sin?" No truly converted man ever talked like that; or, if such a thought ever occurred to him, he must have said at once, "Get thee behind me, Satan, for thou savourest not the things that be of God." Such talks as that would be diabolical. "Shall we sin, that grace may abound? God forbid!" Though the man is pardoned, he hates sin as the burnt child dreads the fire. He is afraid lest, by any inadvertent step, he should grieve his Lord, who has blotted out the past.

Further, true conversion *gives a man perfect rest, but does not stop his progress.* He knows that the work that has saved him is the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ, and that he has not to add even one thread to the robe of righteousness which has been given to him; yet he desires to grow in grace, to become holier and holier, more like his Lord and Master. While he perfectly rests in Christ, he spreads the wings of his soul that he may fly higher and higher towards his Lord and Master.

Again, true conversion *gives a man security, but it does not allow him to leave off being watchful.* He knows that he is safe, and that he shall never perish, neither shall any pluck him out of Christ's hands; but he is always on the watch against every enemy,—against the world, the flesh, and the devil. One of our hymn-writers puts this double truth very sweetly,—

> "We have no fear that thou shouldst lose
> One whom eternal love could choose;
> But we would ne'er this grace abuse,
> Let us not fall. Let us not fall."

True conversion also *gives a man strength and holiness, but it never lets him boast.* He glories, but he glories only in the Lord. He knows that a great change has been wrought in him, but he still sees so much of his own imperfections that he mourns over them before the Lord. He has no time for boasting because all his time is taken up with repenting for his sins, believing in his Saviour, and seeking to live to the praise and glory of God.

True conversion likewise *gives a harmony to all the duties of Christian life.* It makes a man love his God better, and love his fellow-men better. I have no opinion of that religion which consists in a so-called profession of religion which makes a young woman leave her father and mother, and all her family, and go and shut herself up in a convent, or become a sister of misery of some sort or other. If my child, when he says that he is converted, leaves off loving his father, I have very grave doubts about his conversion; I think it must be a conversion wrought by the devil, not by God. But wherever there is true love to God, there is sure to be love to our fellow-men also. The same God, who wrote on one table certain commands in reference to himself, wrote on the other table the commands with regard to our fellow-men. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God," is certainly a divine command; and so is the other, "and thy neighbour as thyself." True conversion balances all duties, emotions, hopes, and enjoyments.

True conversion *brings a man to live for God.* He does everything for the glory of God,—whether he eats, or drinks, or whatsoever he does. True conversion *makes a man live before God.* He used to try to fancy that God did not see him; but, now, he desires to live as in God's sight at all times, and he is glad to be there,—glad even that God should see his sin, that he may blot it out as soon as ever he beholds it. And such a man now comes to *live with God.* He has blessed communion with him; he talks with him as a man talks with his friend; and, by-and-by, he shall dwell with God, throughout eternity, in the palace above. This ought to convince you what an excellent thing true and real conversion is.

III. I have no need to say much, in the third place, concerning THE CONSEQUENT EXCELLENCE OF THE WORD OF GOD. The law of the Lord, which accomplishes such an excellent work, must be itself excellent. I will, therefore, only make one or two brief remarks, and then close.

"The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul," *right away*

from the beginning of conversion to the end. Whenever we want to have converts,—and I hope that is always,—the best thing for us to do is to "preach the Word." There is nothing better; there can be nothing more; there must be nothing less. I do not wonder that, in some churches and chapels, there are no conversions, because the sermons that are preached there are not adapted to that end. They are like a book I reviewed, the other day, of which I said, that there was, possibly, one person in the world who understood it, and that was the writer of the book; and that, if he did not read it through every morning, he certainly would not know, the next day, what he meant by it. In some such fashion as that, there are sermons that are so involved, perplexing, metaphysical, and I know not what besides, that I do not see how any souls can ever be converted by them. The people need to have a dictionary in the pew, instead of a Bible; they need never turn to any Biblical references, but they need someone to explain to them the meaning of the hard words which the preacher is so fond of using. Have I not also read sermons, which were very highly polished, and which, I daresay, were preceded by a prayer that God would convert souls by them? But it was morally impossible that the Lord should do anything of the sort, unless he reversed all his usual methods of procedure, for there was nothing in the sermon that could have been made the means of the conversion of a soul. But, my dear brother, if you preach the Word of God, if you lift up the crucified Christ on the pole of the gospel, you need not be very particular about the style of your speech. You need not say, "I must be a first-class speaker; I must be a trained rhetorician." I believe that a great deal of that first-class speaking is simply the means of veiling the cross of Christ, and that fine talk about Jesus Christ is about the last thing that poor sinners need. I sat at a hotel table, in Mentone, one evening at dinner, and I wanted to speak to a friend who was sitting opposite to me, but someone had put a most magnificent bouquet of flowers in a very splendid vase between us. I was grateful that those flowers bloomed in the middle of winter, and I was pleased to see and to smell them; but, by-and-by, I moved them on one side because they stood in the way of my view of my friend's face. So, I admire fine language, nobody enjoys it more than I do in its proper place; I even think that I could manage a little of it myself if I were to try. But whenever it stands between a poor soul and Christ, I should like to say, "Break that vase into a thousand pieces, fling those flowers into the fire; we do not want them there, for we want the poor sinner to see Christ." It is the Word of God that converts the soul; not our pretty figures about the Word; not our fine talk about it, but the Word itself. So, dear teachers, and dear brother-ministers, let us give them the Word. Yes, that is a very handsome scabbard; but, if you are going to fight, you must pull it off; and there is nothing like the naked blade, the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, to cut, and hew, and hack, and kill, in a spiritual sense; that same Word will, by God's almighty grace, make men alive again, so we must "preach the Word" if we want to have conversions.

There is another thing that I feel I must say to you. *We must not think that, in order to have conversions, it is necessary to leave out any part of the gospel.* I am afraid that some people think that, if you stand and shout, "Believe, believe, believe, believe, believe, believe," you will convert any number of people; but it is not so. You must tell your hearers what they have to believe; you must give them the Word of God, the doctrines of the gospel; for the people, who are said to be converted without being taught from the Scriptures, will very soon need to be "converted" again. There must be shot and shell in our guns if any real execution is to be done; blowing off a lot of powder, and making a great noise, may sound very well for a time, but it comes to nothing in the end. Just the same gospel—adapted as to its tone and method, but the same gospel—that I preach in this place, I would preach in a thieves' kitchen, or to the poorest of the poor, and the most illiterate of mankind. It is the gospel, and only the gospel, that will convert the soul.

Now, dear friends, you who are not converted, my closing word is to you. If you really wish for strength, life, salvation, you will get it through hearing the Word of God, or through reading this precious Book. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." Eyegate is not usually the way by which Immanuel rides into the city of Mansoul. The lifting up of the host, the pretty decorations on the priest's robe, the crucifix, the stations of the cross, and all that Romish mummery, will save nobody. That is not God's way of salvation; but Christ comes into Mansoul through Eargate. "Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live." Whenever the gospel is preached, dear hearer, do really hear it. Remember how our Lord Jesus Christ said, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." Some people do not hear. I have often been thankful, when I have heard some people talk, that I have two ears, because, though their conversation goes in at one ear, I thank God I can let it go out of the other, and so it does me no hurt. But if you are hearing the gospel, mind that you do not act like that. Then let your two ears be two entrances for the Word. Do not have one for entrance, and the other for exit; but "let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom." Let it go in at both ears, and remain in your memory until it reaches your heart. I do not believe that anybody is an earnest and attentive hearer, longing to hear to his soul's profit, without his so hearing if the gospel is preached to him. As I have already told you, the promise is, "Hear, and your soul shall live;" and if you come with a willing mind,—willing to judge, and weigh, and then to believe the Word,—the moment you do believe it, you are saved. That Word of God, which leads you to believe, has already converted you; so, come out, and confess what God has done for you, and then go on your way rejoicing. May God bless every one of you, without a single exception, for his name's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—551, 658, 561.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

PSALM XIX.

This Psalm teaches us the excellence of the two revelations which God has made to man. The first is the revelation which he has made in nature, and the second is that which he has made in his inspired Word. The psalmist first sings of God as he displays himself in his works in creation:—

Verse 1. *The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork.*

So much is this the case that it has been well said that "an undevout astronomer is mad." There are such traces of the Infinite and the Omnipotent in the stars, and especially the more thoroughly they are studied, and the science of mathematics is brought to bear upon them, in order, in some degree, to guess at the incalculable distances and mighty weights of the starry orbs, that a man must perceive in them traces of the divine handiwork if he is only willing to do so: "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork."

2. *Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge.*

Every day speaks to the following one, even as the day that went before it spoke to it, and each day has its own message. Its history is an echo of the voice of God; and if man had but ears to hear, he would perceive that the things which happen from day to day proclaim the presence and power of God. And even night, with her impressive silence, reveals the Most High in the solemn hush and stillness. In the great primeval forests, the winds seem, with songs without words, to declare the presence of the Most High. There is a something there, in the stillness of the night, so weird-like and so solemn, which has made unbelief retreat, and caused faith to lift up her eye, and see more in the heavens at night than she had seen by day: "Night unto night sheweth knowledge."

3, 4. *There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.*

Though nature does not speak, yet its words go to the ends of the earth; and, silently, they sing the praises of God. To the inner ears of an enlightened man, there is a measure of spiritual teaching ever going on.

4—6. *In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun, which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race. His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.*

All this is emblematical of the spread of the gospel; so Paul tells us in the Epistle to the Romans: "Their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world." Our Lord Jesus, up-springing from the couch whereon he slept awhile, has sent his light even to the ends of the earth.

"Nor shall his spreading gospel rest
Till through the world his truth has run,—
Till Christ has all the nations blest,
That see the light, or feel the sun."

There are brighter days yet to come to us. The strength of Christ, as he daily runs the gospel race, has not diminished; indeed, he puts it out yet more and more, and the day shall come when, as the full sunlight makes the perfect day, so shall the full revelation of the gospel to the eyes of all men fill the whole earth with the praises of God.

Now let us read concerning the Book of God. We have read about his works, now let us read about his words.

7. *The law of the* LORD *is perfect,*—

"The doctrine of the Lord (as it may be read,) is perfect,"—

7. *Converting* [or, *restoring*] *the soul: the testimony of the* LORD *is sure,*

Oh, what a mercy that is! What could our souls do with *ifs* and *buts*, and *perhapses*? But the teachings of God's Word are certain, positive, infallible.

7. *Making wise the simple.*

No matter how foolish, how childlike, we may be to begin with, so long as our minds are free from cunning and craftiness, and so are simple and sincere, this Book will make us truly wise.

8. *The statutes of the* LORD *are right, rejoicing the heart:*

You know they do. Oftentimes has your heart leaped for joy when the statutes of the Lord have been made known to you.

8—11. *The commandment of the* LORD *is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the* LORD *is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the* LORD *are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them is thy servant warned:*

Do you not find it so,—that, oftentimes, a text of Scripture comes to your mind just at the moment when you were about to suffer spiritual shipwreck? When you would have done something that would have caused you lifelong grief and vast damage, the Word of God has stepped before you with its flaming danger signal, and you have been stopped in time.

11. *And in keeping of them there is great reward.*

Not, *for* keeping of them, for it is not of debt; but, "*in* keeping of them." It is always best to do as God bids you. You never forget a duty, or refuse to do it, without suffering loss; and every mistake you make, with regard to your Lord's will, is a damage to yourselves. The keeping of his commands is most soul-enriching. The most profitable business that a child of God can carry on is the business of obedience to his Lord's commands: "In keeping of them there is great reward."

12. *Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults.*

The man who searches his heart most will yet leave some sin undiscovered: and he who says, "I have no sin; I am living without sin," has surely never seen into his own heart at all; he must be an utter stranger to the condition it is in. Let this be the prayer of each one of us: "Cleanse thou me from secret faults."

13. *Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins;*

"Let me never dare to do what I know to be wrong. Let me not say, 'I will go just so far, and then stop.' Let me not tempt the Holy Spirit of God. Oh, let me never tempt the devil to tempt me, and put myself into a dangerous position under the notion that God will keep me if I am his child: 'Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins;'"—

13. *Let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression.*

You will never go into apostasy if you are watchful against presumption. Those men who, like Judas, commit the great transgression, and utterly perish, are men who knew nothing about watching their own hearts, but who presumed, and were sinfully bold and self-confident, and so came to an ill end. You know where John Bunyan says Heedless and Too Bold went to; and there are many like them.

14. *Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O* LORD, *my strength, and my redeemer.*

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

ANXIETY, AMBITION, INDECISION.

A Sermon

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C. H. SPURGEON,

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"Neither be ye of doubtful mind."—Luke xii. 29.

THE chief concern of a man should be, to see that his own soul is right in the sight of God. Solomon said, "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." Many persons think a great deal about the adorning of the body, but do not think anything about the ornaments of the soul. The feeding of the physical frame engrosses much care, but the supply of spiritual food is often neglected. Yet, O man, thou thyself art better than thy body! Thine immortal soul is worth far more than that poor carcase of thine which will soon become food for worms; and all the things that thou hast, what are they compared with thine inner self,—thy real self,—thy heart, thy soul, thy spirit?

In our text, our Saviour bids us see to the condition of our mind: "Neither be ye of doubtful mind." He thus calls our attention to the higher and nobler part of our being, and bids us see to it that it is in a right state. No doubt there are some people who are in easier circumstances than others,—some who are in positions where they enjoy many comforts, while others are in places where they suffer many hardships; but, after all, happiness lies more in the mind than it does in the circumstances in which any individual is found, and the man within has far more to do with his own joy or sorrow than anything outside of him has. There have been some who have been perfectly free in a prison, while others have been in absolute bondage with wide estates to roam over. We have known some, whose spirits have triumphed when all around has tended to depress them; and we have seen others, who were wretched and desponding when they had, apparently, all that heart could wish. It is the mind which is the main thing; it will bring thee daylight or midnight, wealth or poverty, peace or war. I wish, dear friends, that half the time we spend in trying to better our circumstances were spent in bettering ourselves after the right fashion; and that even a tenth of the trouble we take to fit our circumstances to our desires

were used in fitting our desires to our circumstances. If we did that, how much happier men and women we should be! Try as you may, you cannot alter the world in which your lot is cast, and you cannot alter God's providential arrangements; so, would it not be better that you should be altered so as to suit the providence, and be resigned to the will of God? It is beautiful to see how often the inspired writers of Holy Scripture were busy with what I may call indoor work,—the work that has to be done within one's own heart. "Bless the Lord, O my soul," says David, in the 103rd Psalm; "and all that is within me, bless his holy name." This indoor work, brethren and sisters in Christ, will always pay us best; and our Lord Jesus, in his exhortations, often bids us attend to it. Did he not say to his disciples, "Let not your heart be troubled"? A little later, he said to them, "In the world ye shall have tribulation;" and he says the same to his disciples in every age. It is no use for you to try to avoid that, for you will have tribulation; yet, "Let not your heart be troubled." All the water in the sea will not hurt your vessel so long as you keep it outside; the danger begins when it gets inside the ship. So, it matters little what is outside you, if all is right within. Have that little bird in your bosom that sings sweetly of the love of God; wear the flower called heart's-ease in your button-hole; and you may go merrily through a perfect wilderness of trouble and a desert of care. A hurricane of afflictions may beat about you, yet you shall be a blessed man, for all the elements of blessedness are within your own heart. God has given them to you, and the devil himself cannot take them away.

In speaking upon this text, I mean to preach a good part of the sermon to myself, for I need it as much as anybody does; but I ask each brother and sister to take home to themselves any part that suits them. And before I have done, I shall have a word for you unconverted people, and I pray God that that word may do you good, and that you may cease to be of a doubtful mind. The original of the text is not easy to explain, for the word translated "doubtful" is not used anywhere else in the New Testament. It appears to have something to do with meteors, so that the passage might be rendered, "Neither be ye of meteoric mind."

As the word is so singular, there have been a great many different opinions as to its meaning. Some have said that it relates to high things that float above, such as the clouds. If they are right, our text says to us, "Do not be like the clouds,—do not have cloudy minds, blown about with every wind of doctrine." Others render it, "Do not be like the birds, high up in the air, always on the wing, unsettled and uncertain, ever flying about, and never at rest." Others find an allusion to the ship that is far out upon the sea, and the text says to them, "Do not always be at sea, tossed up and down; have some anchorage; do not be always drifting to and fro." The word "doubtful" means so much that I do not expect to be able to tell you all that it means, but shall rather give you a few practical thoughts concerning it.

I. "Neither be ye of doubtful mind." That is, first, CHILDREN OF GOD, BE NOT ANXIOUS. Be not tossed up and down by your outward

circumstances. If God prospers you, do not ride high, as the vessel does when the tide lifts it up; and if he does not prosper you, do not sink down as the vessel does when the tide ebbs away again. Do not be so affected by external things as to get into a state of worry, and fretfulness, and care, and anxiety, and distress.

Our Saviour's injunction means, "Do not be anxious about your temporal affairs." Be prudent; you have no right to spend the money of other people, nor yet your own, in wastefulness. You are to be careful and discreet, for every Christian should remember that he is only a steward, and that he is accountable to his Master for whatever he has, and the use he makes of it. But when you have done your best with your little, do not worry because you cannot make it more. And when you have done your best to meet your expenses, do not sit down, and wring your hands because you cannot lessen them. You cannot make a shilling into a sovereign, but be thankful if you have the shilling; and if you sometimes find that you must live from hand to mouth, recollect that you are not the first child of God who has had his manna every morning, nor the first of God's servants to have bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening, with nothing to lay by for the morrow. If this is your case, be not staggered and astonished, as though some new thing had happened unto you; and do not begin to fret, and fume, and worry, and trouble yourself about what you cannot help. Can you alter it with all your worrying?

Have you,—you who are in the habit of worrying and fretting,—ever made any profit by doing so? How much a year do you think that anybody would give you for all your fretting? How much has it brought you in? Come, brother, if it is a good business, I would like to go into partnership with you; but I should like first to know something about your profits. As I look at your face, I notice that it is careworn and anxious. That does not seem to indicate that the business is a profitable one. If I listen to your speech, I hear you murmuring a great deal instead of praising God. That does not seem to me to be a profitable concern. In fact, as far as I have ascertained, either by my own experience or by the observation of others, I have never discovered that anxiety has comforted anybody, or that it has brought any grist to the mill, or any meal to the barrel. Well, if a thing does not pay, what is the good of it?

But perhaps you say, "I cannot help fretting and worrying." No, my good brother or sister, but do you not think that the Lord can help you to help it, and that your faith in him, if it were what it ought to be, would soon be the end of your distress and trouble? Have you not found out yet—I have,—that the very anxiety, which arises through your being in a difficulty, unfits you to meet that difficulty? You are in a great hurry to do something or other, and that something or other does more mischief than could possibly have happened if you had kept still, resting in the Lord, and waiting patiently for him. Instead of doing so, you rush this way, and that way, and so add to your worries instead of decreasing them. You are like the servant with the basket of eggs on her head, who shakes

her head because she is afraid her eggs will fall, and makes them fall by the very process of her trembling. So, you go and make ten troubles in endeavouring to get out of one. There is a text that is very easy to repeat, but not always so easy to obey: "Stand still, and see the salvation of God." But you want to see your own salvation, so you cannot stand still. There is many a man who has run before God's cloud, and who has been very glad to run or even to crawl back again. Some people are so anxious to carve for themselves that they cut their own fingers; they had better leave the carving in the hands of God, and take what he gives them, for he knows far better than they do what is good for them, and his hand is infinitely wiser than theirs can possibly be.

"Oh, but!" says one, "I feel that I must be doing something." That "doing" will just be your undoing unless you stop and consider what God would have you do. The probability is that your action will be unwise and hasty while you are in your present feverish condition. Wait till you get quite cool, brother; you will see your way far better then. At the present moment, you are in such a fidget and flutter that you are very apt to mistake your right hand for your left, and to put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter.

You say again that you cannot help being anxious. Then, my dear friend, I must very solemnly ask you what is the difference between you and the man of the world? There is an orphan child, and it is afraid it will not be fed; but you have a Father in heaven, and if you are afraid, surely, it is of little use for you to have such a Father. Are you not dishonouring his holy name by such conduct as that? Do you not think that others, who see you in this condition, will say, "There is not much power in religion, for these people, who profess to be Christians, are not comforted by it in their time of trouble, and it will not be of much use to them in the hour of their death." Remember Jeremiah's questions, "If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? and if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustest, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?" Surely it is time that we plucked up courage, and were not so easily disheartened, for we have worse trials on ahead than any we have yet been called to endure.

"That is just what I dread," says one. What would you do, then, brother? "I have been thinking that perhaps I had better turn back." But you have no armour for your back; and the perils of going back are far worse than the perils of going forward. Therefore, I charge thee, if thou art indeed a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, to play the man, and let thy faith overcome thy fear. Obey that gracious word, "Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you." Do you not believe that "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose"? You say that you do. Do you not believe that—

> "He sits a Sovereign on his throne
> And ruleth all things well"?

You say that you do. Do you not believe he loves you with an everlasting love? Do you not know that he spared not his only-

begotten Son, but delivered him up for you; and do you think that, after having done so much for you, he will withhold from you anything that is necessary for your well-being? You must not think so. Brother, sister, it would be unkind, ungenerous, ungrateful to think so. Therefore, be not of anxious or doubtful mind concerning temporal things.

"Well," says one, "as far as temporal supplies are concerned, I can leave them entirely in the hands of God; but my anxieties arise from quite another form of trouble. There is a Christian brother who is at enmity against me, and he has been spreading an ill report about me, although I have earnestly sought to walk before God in holy fear, and have watched every step that I have taken, and I feel so worried that I do not know what to do." Well, dear friend, there is one rule which you will generally find to be applicable in such a case as yours. When you do not know what to do, do not do anything at all; and, usually, if the trouble has arisen through false reports about your own character, "the least said, the soonest mended." I believe that, if there is anything you want to have well done, you had better do it yourself; but there is one exception to that rule, and that is the matter of defending yourself. No defence is needed for a good man who can say, "By the grace of God I am what I am." You may leave that matter of your own character, therefore; and as to the good brother not getting on with you, if you have done anything that has grieved him, confess the wrong. "Well, perhaps, if I did, he might not meet me in the same spirit." You have nothing to do with that, dear friend; that is his business, and God's. You go and do the right thing, and then be no longer anxious about it, but leave the result with God.

I hear another brother say, "My anxiety has nothing to do with my personal affairs; I am anxious about the cause of God,—the church over which I preside,—the Bible-class that I conduct,—the mission-field that I try to cultivate. Somehow, things do not go as I could wish, and I am greatly concerned that they are not more prosperous." And what are you doing, good friend, to bring about that result? Are you telling the Lord about it, and agonizing before him in prayer? That is right; but if you are telling yourself about it, and your anxiety is confined to yourself, no good will come of that. "But, sir, all things seem to be going amiss." Yes, I am constantly hearing that. There are some of our friends who believe that we have fallen upon the worst days that have ever been known in this world. Well, it may be so, I cannot say much about that; but I will say this, my dear friends,—that you and I are not of anything like so much importance to the Church of God as we may have imagined; and that the particular department of work which has been entrusted to us, though we ought to think well of it, and to do it well, is not, after all, the hinge upon which the whole universe turns. God managed the world very well before we were born, and he will manage it quite as well when we are dead; his Church will not die, for the Lord still liveth, and his Spirit still abides in the Church, and therefore it must live.

But there will be trouble for us if we begin to think that everything depends upon us. Uzzah was well intentioned, no doubt; yet God smote him for putting forth his hand to stay the ark of the Lord from falling. Let none of us become guilty of Uzzah's sin. It is our business to serve the Lord with all our heart and soul, just as Martha, with all her energy, sought to prepare a supper for Jesus; but when we begin to be cumbered about our service, then we may expect the Master to say to us, as he did to Martha, "Thou art careful and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful; and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her." It is not well that we should be cumbered about our service. No, brethren; the Lord loves his Church far better than we do, and he knows far better than we do how to manage her affairs, so we must—

> "Just do the little we can do,
> And leave the rest with him."

May his blessed Spirit help us so to get rid of all improper anxieties!

II. Another meaning of the text will make a second division of our subject. "BE NOT AMBITIOUS." That is, do not fly high; do not be as the clouds and the meteors, that not only move about, and are uncertain in their movements, but are also high and lofty.

Some people are troubled because they are *aiming at amassing great wealth.* Years ago, if anybody had told them they would one day possess what they have already obtained, they would have thought it was a wonderful sum, more than sufficient to satisfy all their desires. If somebody had asked them, "Will you retire from business then, and be quite happy and content?" they would have answered, "Oh, yes, certainly!" Well, they have gathered far more than that already, yet they are as grasping as ever, and they want more, and more, and more, and they are by no means content with what they have, much as it is. We should all be happier than we are if we were more contented with what is really all that we need, namely, having food and raiment, having neither poverty nor riches. Many men have been like that dog, in the fable, that had the meat in his mouth, but did not eat it because he saw the shadow of it in the water, and was so anxious to get that shadow as well as the substance that he already had that he lost the piece that he might have eaten. Such people are always trying to grasp the shadow, instead of enjoying what God has given to them. Let us not be of such a mind as that.

There are others, who are *ambitious to attain a higher position.* They might be very well content with the kind, good friends they have, but there was a lord, who once looked at them; and ever since that time, they have thought it a very wonderful thing to know a real, live lord. I have heard of a man who used to boast that the king once spoke to him; and though his majesty only told him to get out of the way, he was very proud of having been addressed by the king; and there are many people who think a great deal of that sort of thing. They are only shillings now, but they are anxious to get among the sovereigns. I have no sympathy with

that desire; the best society in the world for me is a company of the Lord's people; and whether they are poor or rich, so long as they are God's saints, I feel myself at home with them. If a brother spoils the Queen's English, and makes a great many mistakes in pronunciation, that does not matter to me. The real piety that is in the man, the grace of God that is in his soul,—that is the thing which ought to please us. To be proud of our association with the great ones of the earth, is both a folly and a sin on the part of any child of God.

Sometimes, we are *ambitious in the service of God beyond what we ought to be.* You are doing well in that little chapel, my brother; the place is full, and God is blessing you; but you want a bigger place, or you want to get away from those poor people whom the Lord has helped through your ministry. Possibly, my friend, you are a Sunday-school teacher, and you have charge of the infants, and they love you, and you are fitted for the work; yet you are not content to be an infant-class teacher, you would like a senior class, and a great stupid you would make of yourself, if you had such a class, for you are not adapted for it. It is well always to be seeking to do more for the Lord Jesus Christ, but I would earnestly discourage you from endeavouring to attain to a higher position merely for the sake of occupying it. Dear brethren and sisters, be not ambitious in this sense; for, after all, what is human greatness? Have you ever met with a really great man who would have given a penny for his own greatness? Do you not know that the higher you rise, even in the Church of Christ, the more responsibility you have, and the heavier burdens you have to carry? Do you not also know that the way to be really great is to be little, and that he who is greatest of all is the one who has learned to be least of all? He who is chief in the Church of Christ is he who serves the Church most, and who is willing to go lowest for Christ's sake. Cultivate that kind of greatness as much as you like; but put aside the other, and be not of ambitious mind even in your Lord's service.

I meet, every now and then, people who are, I hope, God's children, but they seem to me to have got into a very curious state of mind. They have notions, that are not at all according to the realities of every-day life,—flighty notions,—romantic notions about their own rights, and dignities, and importance, and so on. Ah, dear brethren and sisters, some of us were, in our own estimation, very important individuals, were we not, before the grace of God came into us? But when the grace of God works in us, we are made to feel that the very lowest and meanest place is a better position than we have any right to take. When we are in our right senses, we never give ourselves those high and mighty airs. A truly humble believer does not say, "So-and-so did not treat me with proper respect." Oh, dear me! what is the proper respect to which you and I are entitled? May the Lord preserve us from such a spirit as that! But there are some people,—professing Christians, too,—whose heads are always being filled with that kind of nonsense. They do not seem to have learned that the spirit of Christ is a spirit of meekness, which teaches us to bear and forbear, to forgive until

seventy times seven, to expect to have our rights trampled on, and to be willing to lay them all down for any who please to tread upon them. It is blessed to feel, "I will be content to take any place, so long as I can love others, and do them good by loving them, so long as I can but love them to Christ, and help them to love Christ, and manifest the love of Christ to them." O brothers and sisters, we all need to go to school to our dear Lord and Master! You have never read that he said anything about his rights, or about defending his dignity. No, he who is the King of kings, and Lord of lords, was the servant of servants when he was here upon earth; and, truly, he that serves most is the most royal of all. Therefore, "let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus," and then you will not be anxious or ambitious to be great.

III. A third meaning of the text is this, "BE YE NOT OF IRRESOLUTE MIND, WITHOUT DECISION OF CHARACTER."

If you look at the connection of the passage, you will see that this meaning fits in exceedingly well. There are persons, in the world, who may be described as time-servers. The main consideration with them is, what they shall eat, or what they shall drink, or how they shall be clothed; so they are always watching to see which is the best way to go in reference to those matters. As the old proverb has it, they know on which side their bread is buttered; or, according to another familiar saying, they are waiting to see which way the cat jumps; and when they have ascertained that, their "principles" will lead them to jump in that particular direction. Mr. John Bunyan, in "The Pilgrim's Progress," has well described just such persons,—Mr. By-ends and Mr. Fair-speech; and some of us have known their descendants. You remember hearing of the waterman, who got his living by looking one way, and pulling another; and that waterman has had a great many sons, of very much the same character as himself, and they have made a certain kind of progress in the world by that sort of scheming. But you and I, beloved, are not to be of irresolute mind. Every Christian should say, "By the grace of God, my mind is made up to serve him, cost what it may. Does my Lord desire me to keep the Sabbath day holy? Sunday is the best day in my particular line of business, but that does not matter to me. My mind is made up to serve the Lord; and whatever it costs, will make no difference to me. There is a party to be held to-night; and I know that, if I go to it, I shall have to witness the utmost frivolity, and I shall have to be a partaker in what will be, to me, a good deal of sin. Uncle Jonas will be angry if I don't go; but I mean to do the right thing, whether Uncle Jonas is pleased, or no." That is the way all you, who have the love of God shed abroad in your hearts, ought to speak. The question, "What is right?" being answered, you have only to do the right, whatever happens. This is what our Lord meant when he said to his disciples, "Neither be ye of doubtful mind."

"Oh, but!" say some, "we really must look at both sides of that question. There may come a time when we know that a certain course is right; but, if we take it, we may bring ruin upon ourselves.

and upon others, too." Let me read the 4th and 5th verses of this chapter, and when I have done so, there will be no need for you to say anything: "Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him;" and the 8th and 9th verses: "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God: but he that denieth me before men shall be denied before the angels of God." Does not that decide you? God grant that it may, and that you may henceforth say, "I will confess Christ, and act for the right and the true; and, by the aid of his blessed Spirit I will never hesitate to do as he bids me.

"'Through floods and flames, if Jesus lead,
I'll follow where He goes;'—

"neither will I be of doubtful mind."

IV. A fourth meaning of the text is, "BE YE NOT AT SEA SO FAR AS YOUR OWN PERSONAL SALVATION IS CONCERNED."

Brothers and sisters, *there are some, who are not saved, who yet imagine that they are.* There are many, who know nothing of vital godliness, yet who sing as joyfully as the brightest of saints, never suspecting their real condition in the sight of God. Whenever I meet with a man who never has had a doubt about his own condition, I feel inclined to quote to him those lines of Cowper,—

"He has no hope who never had a fear;
And he that never doubted of his state,
He may perhaps—perhaps he may—too late."

Beware of all presumption. There are some, who even decry anything like self-examination. They cannot bear for us to look for the signs and tokens of the Holy Spirit's work within them; and if we talk about practical holiness, they say that we are getting upon legal ground, and turning aside to the "beggarly elements" of the law. From all such turn away, for they can do you no good. You are exhorted, in the Scriptures, to examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith, and to prove your own selves; nay, self-examination alone is not sufficient, and you must cry, with the psalmist, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

But, on the other hand, *there are some, who think that doubts and fears are necessary to a child of God.* I draw a very grave distinction between doubting the truth of God's promise, and questioning whether that promise is made to me; they are two very different things. To doubt the power of the blood of Jesus Christ to cleanse from all sin, is one thing; but, sometimes, to question whether I really have trusted in that blood, is quite another thing. The first is sinful; the second is only proper and discreet. I would advise everyone often to look to the foundation of his faith, to see whether he really has believed in Jesus, and has, in his heart, the true life

which grows out of such faith. But, brethren, there is really no reason in a man saying, "Whether I am a child of God, or not, I am sure I do not know; I sometimes hope I am;"—and so on. I suppose there are few men who have not, at some time or other, suffered pain; but it is not necessary for us always to have the tooth-ache in order to prove that we really are men. And, in like manner, there are few Christians who have never had any doubts, yet it is not necessary to be always doubting in order to prove that we are Christians; but, as we are glad enough to get rid of pain, so are we to be glad to get rid of doubt by fully trusting our Lord who is so worthy of our trust. Dear brethren, you ought to know, you can know, you can know now, whether you are saved, or not. At any rate, if I did not know myself to be saved, I would give no sleep to my eyes, nor slumber to my eyelids, till I had found the Saviour. If a shadow of a doubt about my being washed in the blood of Christ were on my soul, I would get to my knees, and not rise from them until I did really know that Christ had saved me. If you are in doubt, and yet are content about your condition, I fear that you know nothing at all about the matter; for the true child of God, if he is in any doubt about his salvation, is uneasy till that doubt is gone. He cannot rest till he knows that he is saved; and, after all, that is not a very difficult thing to know, for we are told, over and over again, in this blessed Book, that he that believeth in Christ is not condemned, but hath everlasting life. If you have believed in him, you are not condemned, you have his own word for it. He who trusts to Jesus only, builds on a sure foundation; so, if you are trusting in him, you may have the full assurance that you have passed from death unto life, and shall never come into condemnation. Do not, brother, go limping along all your life when you might run in the way of God's commandments. A good old minister, of my acquaintance, when people used to say to him that they hoped, and hoped, and never got any further than that, was in the habit of replying, "You are always hoping, and hopping; I hope you will learn to run one of these days,—to run without weariness in the ways of God."

The last thing I have to do is to bid all here present, who have not believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, to do so at once. My dear friends, my text says, "Neither be ye of doubtful mind." But you cannot help being of doubtful mind while you remain as you are, and I really wish that your conscience would trouble you even more than it now does,—that your uneasiness might become even greater, and your unrest yet more unrestful. Look at yourself, my dear hearer. You have not believed in Christ, so you are in debt to divine justice, and you are hopelessly bankrupt, for you cannot meet one in a million of the claims that are recorded against you; how can you rest as long as you are thus indebted to God? You are a prisoner, too. When Marshal Bazaine had many of the comforts of life on the Isle of St. Marguerite, off the coast of the South of France, he could not rest till he had regained his liberty; and I marvel how you can be so happy, even with the joys of this world, while you are without the great blessing of spiritual liberty.

I wish you felt that you could not rest till you had become emancipated from the bondage of sin, and been made the Lord's freeman. How would you like to be in a condemned cell, and not to know when your execution was to take place? I am sure that you would pity any poor creature, whatever his crime, if you could see him under such circumstances. Perhaps you say that you are living in a wide world, and not in a prison; yet you are condemned already. It was said of the old Roman Empire that, if a man once broke the law, the whole world was a prison for him, for Cæsar had almost universal sway; and God sees you wherever you are, and everywhere you are in the condemned cell; and, perhaps, before the sun shall rise again, your execution will have taken place.

I have been told that, some years ago, there went into the chamber of horrors at Madame Tussaud's exhibition a young gentleman, who was foolish enough to put himself under the guillotine,—in the place which had been occupied by criminals; and as he lay there, with his bare neck exposed to the terrible knife, he was so struck with horror that he was unable to move; and people who went by thought he was one of the waxwork figures, and he could not stir until someone took him away. And, oh, if you did but know where you really are, with that dreadful axe of divine justice just above your head, you might well be paralyzed with horror! Only let your breath fail, or your pulse stop, and down it descends to your utter destruction. But, alas! you are insensible to these things. May the Spirit of God arouse you! May he make you feel your true position, and then I am sure you will not be content to remain a moment longer of a doubtful and undecided mind. Hearken, my friend. That sin of thine can be forgiven, for Jesus died for sinners. That heart of thine can be renewed by grace, for Jesus lives again. You can be delivered from the wrath to come, for Jesus has gone up on high to plead for just such sinners as you are. What are you to do in order that you may have Christ as your Saviour? Why, as the hymn says,—

"Only trust him, only trust him,
Only trust him now."

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

PSALM LVII. 1—6.

Verse 1. *Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me: for my soul trusteth in thee: yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast.*

The heading of this Psalm—"To the chief musician, Al-taschith Michtam of David, when he fled from Saul in the cave,"—tells us when it was written. It is one of David's "golden Psalms." What a mixture of feebleness and strength there is in this first verse,—the feebleness so beautified by being clothed with the strength of faith! What a turning away from man, and what a turning wholly unto the Lord! And, in coming to the Lord, what humility, and what pleading for mercy, and for mercy only! "Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me." Yet what holy boldness also! "For my soul trusteth in thee." And what joyous confidence and what sweet repose in God! "Yea, in the shadow of

thy wings, will I make my refuge." "If I cannot see the brightness of thy face, the shadow of thy wings shall be enough for me. Only let me get near thee,—only permit me humbly to trust thee, and it shall be enough for me, 'until these calamities be overpast.'"

2. *I will cry unto God most high; unto God that performeth all things for me.*

Do you pray like that, my brother, my sister? I hope you do "cry unto God most high;" but do you pray to him as the One "that performeth all things" for you;—not merely who *can* perform all things for you, but who is actually doing it at the present moment,—working out your lasting good by everything that is transpiring around you?

3. *He shall send from heaven, and save me from the reproach of him that would swallow me up. Selah.*

If all the forces on earth are not sufficient to save his saints, God will send sufficient reserves from the ranks of the heavenly host to preserve his people; or if he does not determine to preserve them on earth, he will take them away from the earth, to be with him in glory; but, in one way, or another, they shall be eternally secure.

Mark what the psalmist says of the voracity of his enemy: he speaks of Saul as "him that would swallow me up;" and the believer in Jesus is, at times, such an object of the unbeliever's detestation that he would annihilate him if he could; but God will sooner send help from heaven for his people than that such a calamity should ever happen.

3, 4. *God shall send forth his mercy and his truth. My soul is among lions:*

What peril David was in, and what dangers often surround the best of the men,—if not from arrows, and swords, and spears, from the hellish artillery of unbridled tongues! A human tongue is soft, but it can cut to the very quick; and the wounds from a cruel tongue are not easily healed. Many a man will bear, as long as he lives, the scars that were made by a slanderous tongue. God can save us, however, even from this great trial, and enable us actually to rejoice in this sharp affliction. It is no strange thing that has happened unto us, for so evil men persecuted the prophets that were before us, as they said all manner of evil against them falsely. God himself was slandered by the old serpent in the garden of Eden, so it is not surprising that his children should be still slandered by the serpent's seed.

5. *And I lie even among them that are set on fire, even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword. Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens; let thy glory be above all the earth.*

A grand burst of praise, and all the grander because of the condition of the man from whom it came. "My soul is among lions," says he; "but, 'be *thou* exalted, O God;'" as if he would say, "It does not matter what becomes of me, I shall be content even in this den of lions, so long as thou art exalted above the heavens, and thy glory above all the earth."

6. *They have prepared a net for my steps; my soul is bowed down: they have digged a pit before me, into the midst whereof they are fallen themselves. Selah.*

He knew that it would be so, and he looked upon it as already accomplished; their nets and pits would only injure themselves.

Now look at the next verse in the light of the prayer David had been praying. See what a marvellous act of faith, and what a grand result of unwavering confidence in God it is, for a man to be able to sing as David does even when his soul is among lions, and fierce and powerful enemies are all round him, seeking his hurt.

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THE LORD'S SUPPER.

A Sermon

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On a Lord's-day Evening in the autumn of 1861.

"For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come."—1 Cor. xi. 26.

THIS solemn ordinance has been instituted and perpetuated to commemorate the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, but there is no ordinance to commemorate his life. One reason for this is, because his death implies his life; when you commemorate his death, you testify that he lived. Another reason is, that the Christian's life, better than any ordinance, is the proof that Christ lived, and the testimony to this world how he lived. A Christian man should so act that worldlings would be constrained to ask, "By what power, by what energy, is he actuated to live in a style so superior to that of his fellows?" The answer he should always be prepared to give is something like this, "I live thus because Christ so lived, and it is no more I who live, but Christ who liveth in me. The love of Christ constraineth me, so that I am sweetly and blessedly compelled to live, not unto myself, but unto him who loved me, and gave himself for me." The proof that Christ came into the world should be, that his followers are holy. Let their character be blameless and harmless, their conduct so devoted, and so full of self-sacrifice that it shall be a constant memorial of that Redeemer whose name they profess;—if the mind of Christ be in his people, it will make them so far superior to other men that it must be inferred that some superior energy is in them, and that superior energy is none other than the love of Christ.

They should also so live that, if any ask them how Christ lived, they may be able to say,—not in words, for that might encourage pride, but in effect,—"He lived as I live." It has been well said that ungodly men do not read the Bible, but they read it as it is translated into the lives of Christians. The actions of believers are, to the worldling, the means of judging what our religion really is. Men of the world do not sit down, and study our creeds; but they

trade with us in the common business of life, and if we trade dishonestly, they judge that our creed is wrong, and that our religion is not true. They do not wade through our Bodies of Divinity to balance our arguments, and test their value by the rules of logic; they have a shorter and more practical test than that. If our religion makes us upright in our conduct towards others, and constrains us to fear God in all that we do, then they pronounce our religion to be good; but if, on the contrary, we profess that we believe in Christ, and yet can habituate ourselves to foul and degenerate behaviour, they at once conclude that our religion is a thing of naught. Brethren, I repeat it, that Christ did not institute a memorial of his life because he would have you be the living memorials of himself. He has not left us any ordinance in which his acts, his words, his thoughts can be set forth before the eyes of men in visible signs; he has done better than that, for he has made you to be his signs and ordinances. "Ye are my witnesses," saith the Lord. If the Spirit of God be in you, ye are the testifiers, to the world, of the holiness and the purity of the character of your Lord.

Our text tells us that the Lord's supper was instituted by Christ as a memorial of his death. I am going to speak, first, *concerning that of which the ordinance is a memorial,—Christ's death;* then, *to point out how the ordinance itself shows forth the Lord's death till he come;* and then, thirdly, to show how we, in this ordinance, rather than the ordinance itself,—that *we, in the ordinance, do show the Lord's death till he come.*

Allow me to observe, however, that the retrospect gives us only one aspect of this ordinance, for it also distinctly holds out a very blessed prospect. We are taught, as often as we celebrate it, to look for our Lord's second coming. Our text contains a very strong and a very lively anticipation of his second advent, and of his personal advent, too. Many persons say that Christ is certainly coming again, but that he is coming spiritually. This way of putting the matter seems to me to be a subterfuge. A man, who is here already, cannot be said to be expected to come; and it is certain that Christ is, at this moment, spiritually present with his people. His own declaration is, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." He is never absent, spiritually, from his Church; he still walketh among the golden candlesticks. I cannot see, therefore, how it can be consistent with the ordinary meaning of language to say that he is to come spiritually.

My brother, you believe that Christ is to come spiritually. Suppose that is true, what will be the result? Why, the gospel will be better preached, more sinners will be converted, and may I not also add that the ordinances will be better observed? Do you think that, if Christ should come spiritually into this world, as you say he will, this ordinance would be taken away? "No," I think I hear you say; "certainly not. If Christ shall come spiritually, believers will be more attentive to his commands than they ever have been; they will be still more strictly obedient to his word and will." Just so, but my text says they are to show his death "till he come." That

seems to me to infer that, when he comes, the ordinance will be no longer observed. When he is here in person, I can see adequate reasons why the memorial of his first advent should be dispensed with; but if his second advent be not an absolute reality, I can see neither Scriptural nor logical reasons why this ordinance should cease to be observed at his spiritual coming, whatever that expression may mean.

It is well for us ever to be "looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." There are some, who say that Dr. Watts did not believe this doctrine, but he has expressed it most triumphantly in his paraphrase of Scripture where he writes,—

"Nor doth it yet appear
How great we must be made;
But when we see our Saviour here,
We shall be like our Head.

"A hope so much divine
May trials well endure,
May purge our souls from sense and sin,
As Christ the Lord is pure."

I. First, I have to try to show you WHAT THE LORD'S SUPPER SETS FORTH; it sets forth "the Lord's death."

There is no ordinance to set forth his birth. The Romish Church invented a feast day, and called it Christ-mass, and other churches have imitated the custom; but there is no ordinance, delivered unto us by the Lord Jesus, or his apostles, to commemorate his nativity. Nor do I find, in the Scriptures, any record of an ordinance to commemorate his circumcision, or his first preaching, or his riding in triumph into Jerusalem, or even any ordinance to commemorate his ascension into glory. We generally regard the keeping of the first day of the week as a commemoration of Christ's resurrection, and of his appearance to his disciples, when he showed them his pierced hands, and feet, and side; but even that can scarcely be called an ordinance. So, of all that Christ did or suffered, there is no ordinance enjoined upon us but that which relates to his death. Now, why is this?

It is, first, *because it was for his death that Christ was most despised;* therefore, for his death let him be most honoured. It was the cross of Christ that was his shame; it was to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness; and it is here that the enemies of Christ always begin their attacks. They deny his Divinity because he died; they mistrust his power to save on the very ground for which we are able to trust to it,—because he died. Usually, the battle against Christ and his Church rages most fiercely around his cross; his adversaries, led by the great master-spirit of evil, all seem to say, "Fight neither with small nor great, save only with that great doctrine of the atonement, for that is as a king in the hosts of Israel." Those who preach the accursed crusade against Christ have, for their watchword and rallying cry, "Against his cross! Against his cross!" Therefore it is, most blessed Master,

that thou hast provided this ordinance to be, as it were, a shield to thine own cross; so that, if every minister should cease to preach thine atoning death, the silent bread and the voiceless wine should, louder than a thousand thunders, tell the world that Jesus died, and that, through his broken body, and his poured-out blood, sinners alone receive eternal life.

Christ's death, too, is chosen for special celebration *because it is the most important part of all that he did or suffered.* We would not depreciate his life, his baptism, his work, or his resurrection, but his death is the centre of all. All the doctrines of the gospel revolve around Christ's death as the planets revolve around the sun. Take away the sun from the solar system, and you have dislocated everything; all the stupendous wheels must cease to move. Remove thy cross, O Christ, and the key-stone of the arch of truth is gone! Take away thy death, O Jesu, and it is death to all that thou hast taught, for all that thou teachest derives life from the fact that thou hast died! O my dear brethren, whatever errors may creep into the Church, they will be important only as they mar the lustre of the cross! I think it is the bounden duty of every Christian to be ready to die for the truth. You know that our forefathers readily gave their lives for the defence of believers' baptism. Still, not in the least depreciating believers' baptism, I say that, if it be worth while for one to die for that, it is worth while for tens of thousands to die, in one tremendous hecatomb, in defence of the fact that Jesus died. As this is the chief point of the adversaries' attack, so must we ever regard it as the most important bastion of defence. Hither, Christian, turn thine eyes the most frequently; here let thy thoughts dwell the most intensely; here lies the source of all thy hopes, here thou shalt find the well-spring of all thy joys. Think it not unimportant, then, that Christ has given to his death so solemn and yet so simple a memorial.

Methinks the Master also appointed this ordinance *because his death is, after all, the most comforting thing in the whole gospel system.* Whither dost thou go, thou of the weeping eye, when thy heart is breaking,—whither dost thou go for comfort but to the place where comfort was not,—namely, to the cross of the dying Saviour? Whither dost thou go, poor breaking heart, when the woes of this life swell and gather till thy soul is nigh to bursting,—whither dost thou go but to that spot where misery reached its climax? It is strange that the masterpiece of misery is also the masterpiece of comfort. The darkest spot in the whole world is yet the source of all our light. The dying of the Saviour gives us life; his wounds heal us; his agonies bring us peace; his tortures yield us ease. The good Shepherd knew that, if his sheep desired to have green pastures, they would find them at the cross, so he appointed this ordinance to bring them there. Well did he understand that, if they would lie down beside the still waters, they must come to that place where the blood flowed from his blessed brow, and hands, and feet, and side. You have said, with the spouse, "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth," and he does it in this ordinance. You have sometimes asked him to bring you into his banqueting-house, and that his

banner over you might be love; but that banner has never floated from any mast but the cross, and therefore he has brought you there. You have asked that you may sit under his shadow with great delight, and that his fruit may be sweet to your taste. This is his fruit,—his broken body, and his shed blood,—so he brings you here. You have said, "I will go up to the palm tree, I will take hold of the boughs thereof." Your Lord knows that you cannot do this except you view his cross as that palm tree, springing up in a desert land, and bearing all manner of delightful fruits. You will need no further arguments, brethren, to convince you of the wisdom and tenderness of Christ in bequeathing to you this most comforting ordinance that so his death may be held in perpetual remembrance.

II. Now I go on, in the second place, to show you HOW THE BREAD AND WINE, IN THIS ORDINANCE, SET FORTH THE DEATH OF CHRIST.

You can hardly fail to notice how the ordinance is adapted *universally* to keep in memory the fact it commemorates. You recollect what happened to the woman who looked back after she came out of Sodom. The Lord would have us "Remember Lot's wife," so he turned her into a pillar of salt; but that memorial is only to be seen by those who pass that particular spot. Now, suppose that the Master had said to his disciples, "Erect for me a brazen column; let it be in the form of a cross, and write upon it that Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried;" it would not have appealed to our observation anything like so forcibly as this ordinance, which is not restricted to any time or place. This memorial has been seen in the darkness of the catacombs of Rome, where only a tiny taper afforded light to the worshipping assembly. This memorial has been seen among the heather on the Scottish hillside, where the lightning flash lent its kindly beam to the minister as he read the Sacred Word. This memorial is seen, to-day, in the far-off isles of the sea. From North to South, from East to West, this is the standing memorial of him who died. Better than storied urn, or animated bust, or marble rare, or metals precious, or jewels unrivalled for their worth, is this blessed memorial, because it can be seen everywhere, in every land.

This is also an admirable memorial seeing that it is *perpetual*. Monuments of brass wear out; the tooth of Time devours the rugged granite itself. Though you build, for a king, a monument like the pyramids of Egypt, yet shall his name be forgotten, and even Pharaoh may lack a wise man to decipher the inscriptions on his tomb, and recount the story of his mighty acts. Not so is it with this blessed ordinance; it can never wear away, it is ever new. I may say to it, "O sacred Eucharist, thou hast the dew of thy youth!" This memorial is as fresh, more than eighteen hundred years after its institution, as it was when, in the upper room, the disciples first celebrated it in anticipation of their Master's approaching death. So, when centuries have followed centuries, and Time himself shall have become bald, and his scythe shall have lost its edge;—when yon sun shall have grown dim with age, and the moon shall be pale with fading weakness;—even then shall this ordinance be as fresh and as

new as ever. It is perpetual, because the commandment of our King cannot be repealed; it is never to be set aside till the need of testimony shall have passed away, till Christ himself shall come to reign among men.

And, oh, what a *simple* memorial this is! Priest of Rome, go thou to thy sacristy, and put on thy millinery,—thy red, thy blue, thy silver, thy scarlet, and thy fair white linen;—play the harlot, for such thou art, before the eyes of men in all thy wanton fineries; prove thyself to be the true descendant of her of Babylon by the gaudiness of thine apparel! But know, O priest, that we need none of thine enchantments for the right observance of this ordinance! Ye sons of toil, ye can come here with your garments still covered with the dust of your labour. What need we to fulfil to the letter our dear Master's own injunctions? What but a piece of bread and a cup of wine? Oh, how shamefully have men mimicked this ordinance! How have they invented strange devices to make that appear wonderful which was wonderful enough in itself; because, like everything sublime, it was simple, and majestic in its own simplicity!

This simple ordinance has sometimes made me smile at the useless artifices of the foes of Christ. I have smiled at the thought that our Master has given us a memorial so simple that we can observe it even when our adversaries are most opposed to us. I have broken the memorial bread, and sipped the wine, in Venice, beneath the Austrian sway, where, to have held a public Protestant service would have involved imprisonment; but how could they have stopped us? There were four of us in our own inn; might we not do there as we pleased? No one knew why we wanted a small piece of bread, and a cup of wine; and we four sat around the table, and I avow that it was as much the Lord's supper as it is when thousands of us assemble here to keep the sacred feast. If we were in Rome itself, in a room at the Vatican, though the Pope himself were in the next room, we might observe this blessed ordinance, and he would never know that we had done so unless we chose to tell him. How could he deny us bread? That would be scant hospitality. And how could he deny us wine? And having bread and wine, we want no altar, and we need no priest. Wherever two or three Christians are met together, there may they celebrate the supper of their Lord. It is as valid without a minister as with one, and just as really the Lord's supper though there be no ordained presbyter or learned Doctor of Divinity to preside at the table. Blessed memorial of the death of Jesus, they cannot put an end to thee! We can laugh to scorn all the priests and the soldiers of Rome. If we had built a memorial pillar, they might have pulled it down. The sons of Moab might have stopped up our wells, and cast down our towers; but who can destroy this simple ordinance? Persecution would no more avail to put an end to the Lord's supper than would the swords of Pharaoh's soldiers have availed to put an end to the plague of flies. The craft or skill of man can never put an end to the simple memorial of bread and wine; all that he can do is but to parody or pervert it.

I think, too, that this is a very *blessed* memorial. The broken bread sets forth the broken body of our Lord; and the wine, being

separate from the bread, shows how his blood flowed from his body. The sign itself most touchingly sets forth the refreshing qualities of the blood which flowed from his head, and hands, and feet, and side. The point I want to emphasize is that Christ has instituted a memorial of his death which requires, to carry it out, Christian hearts, and, therefore, hearts full of love to himself and faith in himself. If you wish your name to be remembered, you may say, "It is my desire that men should keep my birthday." So they may; and, in a hundred years' time, the recollection of the fact of your birth will have dwindled down into a mere fable. How many institutions we still have, the origin of which we do not know! But suppose you could have an institution kept up only by those who love you, and suppose, in addition, that you had the power always to preserve in the world some hearts that would love you, what a blessed memorial that would be! In coming to the table of our Lord, we meet not as a company of men who have no regard for Christ, no constraining love to kindle our passions to a flame. Why, his very name makes our hearts leap for joy!

"Sweeter sounds than music knows
Charm me in Immanuel's name."

His death is, to us, the most delightful topic of meditation. We come not to the table of our Lord as the slaves of Pharaoh were flogged to build the pyramids; but we come cheerfully, joyfully, delighted to remember him, feeling it to be less a duty than a privilege, and far more a pleasure than merely a service. This supper is, virtually, the outward and visible sign of ten thousand times ten thousand broken hearts that have been bound up, tearful eyes that have been made to flash with holy joy, aching consciences that have been eased, and hearts that could sooner cease to beat than cease to love; so it is, indeed, a blessed and choice memorial of our Saviour's death, which can never be forgotten by his loved ones.

III. Now I come to my last point, and that is, perhaps, the most practical,—HOW YOU AND I ARE TO SHOW OUR REDEEMER'S DEATH IN THIS SUPPER.

Some people are very particular about the way in which the Lord's supper is administered; but, so long as everything is done decently, and in order, I think that should be enough for us. I was staying, once, with a gentleman,—a Dissenter,—who had become more than a little formal. He was telling me that he had done a great deal of good in his parish, and, among other excellent things, he recounted one, with an air of enthusiasm which made me laugh. He said, "When I came here, these people used to bring the wine for the sacrament in a black bottle; and, as I am sure that I could not celebrate the Lord's supper if the wine came from a black bottle, I have provided something better." I thought it would have been a great deal better if he had asked the people whether they had brought black hearts; for a black bottle does not signify much, but a heart that is not right in the sight of God is the thing that needs to be taken away. If you and I have our hearts right, we need not mind how simple the mode in which the ordinance is administered.

But, now, what are you and I to do in observing this ordinance? We are to show the Lord's death. Then, if we are to show it, we must show it to somebody. To whom? Why, first, *to ourselves*. My soul, be not thou content unless, in that bread, thou dost discern the Lord's body for thyself. Do not eat and drink, as the apostle says, "unworthily, not discerning the Lord's body." Take heed, O my soul, that thou be not satisfied with eating the bread unless, by faith, thou dost realize that the body of Christ was offered up for thee;—unless thy faith can so participate in the merit of that sacrifice that the eating of the bread becomes to thee a lively picture of thy participation in the results of Christ's death! Mind, too, that the wine sets forth his blood to you. Brethren, these symbols are but as the veil before the holy of holies; you must look beyond the symbols to that which is within the veil; or else, of what use are the signs to you? The bread is nothing, the wine is nothing; that which the bread sets forth is everything, feed thou on that; that which the wine pourtrays is everything, see to it that thou art a partaker of that.

What multitudes of professors are quite content with the outward sign! I fear that the Lord's supper, through being so grossly misused, has deceived many. See how eagerly they send for a clergyman when they lie dying! Men, who have scarcely ever entered a church or chapel in their lives,—men, who fear not God, and have no saving interest in the death of Christ,—desire to have this bread in their mouths at the last. Let them know that, dying impenitent, this bread shall be a swift witness against them. Not being born of God, and having no right whatever to this ordinance, they ate and drank unworthily, and so ate and drank condemnation to themselves. If any of you have imagined that this ordinance can save your souls, let me correct that error at once; it may ruin them, but it cannot save them. You must get right away to Christ, right away from this ordinance. It is not as unrenewed sinners, but as saints, as Christ's disciples, as his saved ones, that you are to partake of this feast. You must come to Christ first, as a sinner, just as you are. I have read, or heard, sermons which proved that the minister was not at all clear which was Christ,—the bread upon the communion table or the Saviour upon the cross. There is a sermon upon this text: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest;" in which the preacher invites his hearers to come to the Lord's table. That is the very worst place to which they could come. They must first come to Christ; and then, after they have found acceptance in him, they may come to his table. But they must not be invited to his table until they have come to himself, and trusted in his atoning sacrifice. The Lord's supper is a curse, not a blessing, to unbelievers; so let none of us think of feeding upon Christ in the sign until we have Christ in reality in our hearts.

Next, we are to show Christ's death *to others*. Some of you will be spectators while the rest of us are observing this ordinance. As we shall, in one great host, break bread together, we shall say to you, "We do, each of us, believe that Jesus died for our sins, according to the Scriptures; we have put our confidence in his death as making reconciliation for us before God; we personally avow our own vital

faith in him; and we declare to you, whatever may be your judgment concerning him, that he is all our salvation and our desire." The very poorest amongst the communicants will be a preacher. When you, dear friend, take the bread and the wine, you will preach a sermon. I believe that the word used here has in it, in the Greek, the idea of preaching. You will say, by partaking of this ordinance, "I believe in Jesus Christ, in his broken body, and his poured-out blood." I hope that will be an appeal to the consciences of you who will be looking on at the ordinance, asking you whether you also believe in Christ; and though the appeal will be a silent one, I pray you to answer "Yes" or "No" to it. As you see us partake of the bread and the wine, think that you hear a voice coming up from the communion table, and saying to each one of you, "Soul, soul, when wilt thou, too, believe in Jesus? When wilt thou cast thyself on him, that he may be thine All-in-all?"

Nor, by this ordinance, do we set forth Christ's death only to ourselves and to others, but also *to God himself*. We do, as it were, plead the merit of Christ's broken body and shed blood every time we observe this ordinance. We bring before God,—not a sacrifice, as though the one offering needed to be repeated,—but a memorial of the finished and perfect sacrifice, which was once for all offered for the sins of men. Brethren, it is a solemn thing to think that, every time we come to the communion table, we bring before the Eternal Father the memorial of the death of his only-begotten and well-beloved Son.

We bring that memorial, too, *before the holy angels*, hovering, as they undoubtedly are, over every Christian assembly. We say to each of them, "He who was 'seen of angels' is our hope; tell the glad tidings through all the golden streets that the death of Christ is still remembered in this lower world. Speed on your swift wings to heaven, and let it be known in your glorious dwelling-place that there are men and women, saved by the precious blood of Jesus, meeting to commemorate his death."

And, brethren, in this ordinance we show Christ's death *even to the devils in hell*. There is nothing which they fear so much as the death of Christ. The breaking of the bread and the pouring out of the wine are like the flaunting of a victorious banner in the face of the beaten foe. It is the flashing before the eyes of Satan of the sword that smote him in the days of old, and that will make him tremble again even now. Earth and heaven and hell are gathered around us as we meet at the table of our Lord, and we poor puny men become a spectacle unto the three worlds. We are said to be men wondered at, but how much more wonderful is that which is visibly set forth in this ordinance,—the passion and death of our Lord Jesus Christ!

O my brethren and sisters in Christ, I pray you to see to it that you now show his death to your own conscience. Does it accuse you? Then, show it the wounds of Christ, and it shall be well with you. Does the law condemn you? Show it your bleeding Master, and it will at once absolve you. Show Christ's death to your unbelief; and, surely, it will vanish away. Show Christ's

death to your heart; and, surely, it must melt with love to him. Show Christ's death to the weeping eyes of your repentance, and the tears shall be wiped away, and you shall see your pardon bought with blood. Show Christ's death to the weak, Leah-like eyes of your faith, and it shall strengthen them till they shall see even the hidden mystery, and discern the substance which, by mortal eyes, cannot be seen. Show Christ's death to your wretched and miserable spirit, that has been troubled and burdened with the cares of this world; and it must leap for joy, and cast all its burdens away. Show the death of Christ to your old sins, which have been coming back to you to-day; and it will drive them all away. Show Christ's death, in fact, to the eyes of your heart, the eyes of your emotions, the eyes of all your powers of body and soul; and thus you shall be like him who said, "I shall see him," though you shall not need to add, as he did, "but not now;" you may say, "I shall behold him," but you will not need to spoil it by adding, as Balaam did, "but not nigh," for Christ shall bring you into his banqueting-house, and his banner over you shall be love. Sinner, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and remember that he said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Saint, come to the table of your Lord, and feast upon the emblems of his dying love, remembering that blessed are they who believe on him, for there shall be a performance of those things which were told them by the Lord.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

ROMANS VIII. 18—39.

Verse 18. *For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.*

Paul made "the sufferings of this present time" into a matter of simple arithmetic and careful reckoning. He added them all up, and saw what the total was; he seemed to be about to state a proportion sum, but he gave it up, and said that the sufferings were "not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed." Did they stand as one to a thousand? No, else they had been worthy to be compared. Did they stand as one to ten thousand,—or one to a million,—or one to a million of millions? If so, they would still have been worthy to be compared; but Paul saw that there was no proportion whatever between them. The sufferings seemed to be but as a single drop, and the glory to be as a boundless ocean.

"Not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." That glory is not yet fully revealed; it is revealed to us, but not yet in us. What, then, shall we do in the meantime? Why, wait with patience, and bear our appointed burden until the time comes for us to be relieved of it;—wait, however, with hope,—wait, too, as we must, quietly enduring the pains and pangs which precede so glorious a birth. In this respect, we are not alone, as the apostle goes on to say,—

19—22. *For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.*

We live in a world that is under a curse,—a world that was made subject to bondage through human sin. What means this cold? What mean these fogs? What mean the general mourning and sighing of the air all through the winter? What mean the disturbances, and convulsions, and catastrophes that we hear about on all hands? It is the creation groaning, travailing, waiting,—waiting till there shall be a new heaven and a new earth, because the former things shall have passed away.

23. *And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.*

Our soul has been delivered from the curse. The redemption of the soul is complete, but not yet that of the body. That must suffer pain and weariness, and even descend into the tomb, but its day of manifestation shall surely come. At the appearing of our Lord from heaven, then shall the body itself be delivered, and the whole creation shall also be delivered. So we wait in a travailing condition; and we may well be content to wait, for these pangs within us and around us signify the glorious birth for which we may wait in hope.

24, 25. *For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.*

This is our attitude and our condition now,—waiting for the glory which is to be revealed in us, and accepting the sorrow which is appointed to us as an introduction to the joy which is to come to us mysteriously, through it. But while we are waiting, we are not without present comfort.

26. *Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.*

You must, I am sure, as children of God, often have felt that Spirit within you groaning in prayer what you could not express. How often have you risen from your knees feeling the utter inadequacy of words to express the desires of your heart! And you have felt that you had larger desires than you have been able to interpret. There have been mighty pangs within you telling of the presence of this wrestling Spirit.

27. *And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit,*

When you do not know your own mind, God knows the mind of the Spirit, and that is the very essence of prayer. He "knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit,"—

27. *Because he maketh intercession for* (or, *in*) *the saints according to the will of God.*

Whatever the Spirit of God prompts us to pray for, is according to the mind of God, for it is not possible that the Holy Spirit should ever be otherwise than in perfect accord with the Divine Father. The eternal decrees, if we could read them, would convey to us the same truth as the impulses of the Spirit in our heart. And this is the true explanation of prayer,—that what God intends to do, his Spirit leads his people to ask him to do; and thus there is no conflict between the eternal predestination of God and the earnest entreaties of his people. They are, in fact, the outcome of that very predestination.

28—30. *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.*

These great truths must never be separated. Any one of these things being true of us, it is most certain that the rest are also true. Now, my dear brother, you cannot read God's foreknowledge, neither can you enter into the secrets of predestination ; but you can tell whether you are called, or not ; you can know whether you are justified by faith, or not ; and if you get hold of those links, you have got a grip of that endless chain which is firmly fastened to the granite rock of eternity past, and which is also fastened to the rock of the glorious eternity which is yet to be revealed.

31—33. *What shall we then say to these things ? If God be for us, who can be against us ? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things ? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect ? God that justifieth ?*

For so we think it ought to be read. That is another question. Can God lay anything to our charge after having justified us ? Will he contradict himself ?

34. *Who is he that condemneth ?*

There is only One who can, for there is only one Judge, and that Judge is Jesus. So, the apostle puts it again in the form of a question,—Shall he condemn us ?

34. *It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.*

Shall he condemn us ? It is altogether impossible.

35. *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword ?*

What a long list of ills ! They seem to make up a Jeremiah's roll of sorrow. Can they separate us from the love of Christ ? They have all been tried ; have they ever succeeded ?

36. *As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long ; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.*

But did they succeed in separating saints from the love of Christ even in the days of martyrdom ?

37—39. *Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

" Wherefore, comfort one another with these words."

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

WHO LOVES CHRIST MOST?

A Sermon

PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MARCH 3RD, 1904,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Thursday Evening, February 3rd, 1876.

"There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged,"—Luke vii. 41—43.

WHEN we commence the Christian life, it is very natural that we should say to ourselves, "We do not wish to be second-rate Christians, or ordinary Christians,—much less to prove like the Laodicean professors, neither cold nor hot, or, like those of whom the apostle John wrote, 'They went out from us, but they were not of us.'" I like to see the holy ambition of the young convert who desires to bring forth much fruit to the glory of God,—to love Christ much, and manifest that love by every possible act of devotion to him. Truly, my dear friends, you need not be as your fathers have been, for we have often provoked the Lord, and have many times done what we ought not to have done. There is plenty of room for improvement upon the past generation, and we would earnestly urge those of you who are commencing the heavenly race to run faster than we have run,—to keep your eye more steadfastly fixed upon the goal, and to continue more resolutely in the right way than we have done. We do not desire that you should imitate our mistakes, or that you should fall into our backslidings. We wish that yours might be the highest conceivable form of Christian life; and we know that, if it is to be so, there must be in you intense love to Christ.

My object, at this time, is to give some directions which, peradventure, the Spirit of God will bless, especially to beginners, that they may be taught to love Christ much, and manifest that love as this woman did. It may be that some of us, who have been for years on the right road, may also get stirred up to greater zeal and devotion to our Lord. Possibly, we may hear our Master saying to us, as he said to the angel of the church of Ephesus, "I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love." If his Spirit shall make our love to burn more vehemently, we may

be able to start anew, and after a better fashion, in the work and service of our Lord. This were "a consummation devoutly to be wished."

With this end in view, I shall begin by speaking upon the fact that *we must all be saved in the same manner.* Whatever our desires may be to outrun others in the Christian race, we must begin by being saved in exactly the same manner as others are. Then, secondly, I shall try to show that *it will help to increase our love if we have a deep sense of our own sinfulness;* and then, thirdly, provided we have this deep sense of sin, and, in consequence, possess a burning love to Christ, *this will lead us to show our love very much as this woman did.*

I. First, then, whatever our desires may be to serve our Master to the utmost,—to be in the front rank of his servitors,—yet WE MUST BEGIN WHERE OTHERS BEGIN.

There is the same door of entrance for us as that which was opened to the very chief of sinners; for there is no difference between one sinner and another in the sight of God, so far as the plan of salvation is concerned. There may be many differences in other matters; but, in the matter of salvation, there is nothing which places one man in a different position from another, or which allows him to be saved in any other way than the one way which God has laid down for a sinner's salvation.

You notice, in the parable before us, that *both the parties were in debt:* "the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty;" but they were both in debt. So, if some men have plunged into the grossest vice, and defiled themselves, and polluted their lives, they are certainly in debt five hundred pence; but if others have been kept from overt acts of transgression, yet, since their hearts have gone astray from God, and since, with their desires, and with their lips, and in many respects even in their actions, they have broken his holy law, they also are in debt; fifty pence, it may be; but, still, they are in debt. There is not one man among us, who can stand before the Most High, and say to him, "I owe nothing to thy justice, for I have never infringed thy righteous laws." Any man who should say that would be a liar, and the truth would not be in him. If we say that we have no sin, or that we have not sinned, we lie in the face of the living God, and in the teeth of our own conscience, too. So, we are all in debt, even if the amount differs in each case.

We also learn from the parable that, *although both the parties were in debt, neither of them had anything with which to meet the liability:* "they had nothing to pay." One only owed fifty pence; but, then, he had not the fifty pence; nay, he had not even one penny out of the fifty required to meet the amount. The other debtor owed five hundred pence, and his plight was just the same, for he had nothing to pay. It sometimes happens that the man, who owes the most, has the most to pay, but it is not so here. He has nothing to pay. And, sometimes, the man, who owes but very little, may be the one who has something with which to meet his obligations. He has pulled up just at the right time; and

though he is insolvent, yet he can almost meet the debt. But it is not so here. He has nothing to pay. Neither of them could produce so much as a single penny, and that is your case and mine, dear brethren; we have nothing to pay. All that we have, or ever shall have, is due to God already. If there were any assets, they would not belong to us; and there is nothing in reserve,—nothing that we can look for, that will drop in, towards the close of life, with which all our old scores can be wiped out. Under the law, there is nothing for us but debt, debt, debt; and even if we had the power to pay our old debts, new ones would soon swallow up all our capital. But we have nothing with which to meet our old debts. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself;" is still God's daily demand upon us; and if we were able to meet it, it would not in any way make up for the deficiencies of the years that have gone by. Here, we all stand upon an equality; we are all in debt, and we have none of us anything with which to pay that debt.

And here is the glory of God's mercy in dealing with sinners who believe in Jesus. In the parable of the two debtors, we are told that *the creditor freely forgave them both.* He did not say to either of them: "I will set you a certain time, and you shall pay me so much a week until you clear it off." Oh, no! he forgave them both, wiped the score out altogether. He did not ask anything of them, for he knew that they had nothing; but he forgave them, says the text, frankly; that is, freely. He did not forgive one of them because his debt was a misfortune, which he could not avoid; but he frankly forgave them both. He did not look for any worthiness in either of them, or expect anything from either of them; but, as an act of pure gratuitous favour, because he delighted to show kindness to his poor debtors, he said, "There, go home, both of you; I shall never ask you for the amount of your debts again. I have crossed it off my book, though I have received nothing whatsoever from you."

Now, this is just what the Lord, in his infinite mercy, does for all poor sinners who come and trust his Son. He gives them a receipt in full, for there is One who has paid the debt for them. All glory be to his name, it has been paid in full; but, so far as we are concerned, the Lord does not give us pardon because of our tears, or prayers, or repentances, or even because of any merit in our believings, for our very believings are marred by unbelief, but he forgives us freely. And he does not forgive us because he thinks that, in the future, we shall improve upon the past. Oh no; we are his workmanship when we do improve, and it is he who must have the credit of our improvement. But he forgives us freely, "according to the riches of his grace," passing by iniquity, transgression, and sin, and remembering not the wickedness of his people, "because he delighteth in mercy."

Here, then, we are all on a level; and if any young Christian thinks that he starts with an advantage over others, he makes a great mistake; and he had better go back, and start where all pilgrims

to Zion must start,—at that wicket gate which John Bunyan describes, or, better still, at that cross where Christian lost his load, and whence he went on his way rejoicing. You must come down from that high horse, young man; your birthright is not worth a farthing to you, your church-going and your chapel-going are not worth a single penny to you; you must trust in Christ just as a harlot or as a thief must. It is true that you have been moral, and I thank God for it. It is true that you have been preserved from contamination with an ungodly world, and I thank God for it. But, still, in the matter of the soul's salvation, "other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." Faith in the atoning sacrifice of Christ is the way of salvation for the most immoral, and for the most moral, too. You and I, dear friend, must go together to the Lord Jesus, and see in him the full atonement made, and the utmost ransom paid, and then we must accept, as poor bankrupt sinners, the free gift of a full discharge through the sovereign mercy of God whom we have offended.

It is absolutely essential for us to begin here; for, if we do not start our Christian life rightly, we shall never make progress in it. If there is a mistake in the first course of bricks laid, or if the foundation is not well dug out, or if things are done improperly at the beginning, there are sure to be all sorts of mischief in the rest of the building. Therefore, I charge you, begin by coming to Christ, as naked sinners needing to be clothed. Do not come to him in the filthy rags of your self-righteousness, seeking to have a piece of his spotless robe of righteousness tacked on, for that can never be. If you think of passing your counterfeit coin with Christ's pure gold, you are making a fatal mistake. I charge you to begin as lost, ruined, and condemned sinners, for that is what you really are; coming to Christ like that, and trusting in him, you shall be saved, you shall be adopted into the divine family, you shall be sanctified in Christ Jesus, and, in due time, you shall be glorified through him, and through him alone.

II. Now, secondly, I want to show you how our lives may become more intense than the lives of many other professing Christians are through our love being more fervent than theirs is. In order to attain that end, WE MUST HAVE A DEEP SENSE OF OUR OWN SIN. "Which of them will love him most?" "I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most."

I can imagine someone saying, "I was never, in very deed, so great a sinner as some have been; must I, therefore, love Christ less than those who have been greater sinners than I have? Will this morality of mine,—in which I do not trust for a moment, and concerning which I do not speak boastingly,—will this put me at a disadvantage in comparison with others? Shall I never attain to such love as that woman had who was a sinner?" Listen, my friend. Suppose that the man, who owed five hundred pence, only thought that he owed fifty. He would not love the creditor, who forgave him, any better than the one who did really owe the fifty pence, would he? It was not the amount forgiven, as you will readily see, which was the cause of the greater or the lesser love;

but it was the consciousness of the amount,—the realization of its greatness, which would be the cause of the greater love. I do not doubt that there are some very great sinners, who have been forgiven, who yet do not love Christ much; and, on the other hand, there are some who, in the judgment of men, and, perhaps, in the judgment of God, are nothing like such great sinners, who, nevertheless, love Christ more, the reason being that these greater sinners never had such a deep sense of the enormity of sin as these, comparatively speaking, lesser sinners have had. The question turns, you see, not so much upon the actual amount of debt, as upon the consciousness of the magnitude of that debt,—not so much, in the matter of love, upon the indebtedness, as upon the sense of that indebtedness; so that you, who have been kept in the ways of morality, before you were converted, may rightly place yourselves among the greatest debtors, and, peradventure, may love Christ even more than some others do, who have actually been grosser offenders, but who have never been awakened to such a full sense of their sinfulness as you have had; and, consequently, do not think themselves to be the greatest debtors to God. It is, dear friends, a deep sense of our sinfulness, coupled with the perfect consciousness of our forgiveness, that will work in us intense love to Christ.

Let me further say that *anyone, who has been forgiven very great open sin, ought certainly to have the greatest and strongest motive for love to Christ.* You cannot always tell how love comes into the heart. I do not deny the duty of love, but love does not come merely as a duty. You love your mother, or you love your wife, and it is your duty to do so; but you could not be made to love either of them simply by being told that it was a duty. You do it because of the natural impulse within your heart which moves you to love. In like manner, love to our Heavenly Father, and love to Christ is, no doubt, a duty; but it is much more than a mere matter of duty. That is a cold sphere for love to live in; and she soon gets away from the polar regions of duty to the more tropical climate of the garden of Gethsemane and the place called Calvary. She loves because she cannot help loving,—because she must love. The gratitude within her heart is so great, that she cannot help loving the Lord who has done so much for her.

I hope that is the case with any of you who were once drunkards, or who had lost your character, or who had sinned against God in an open way, and even dared, perhaps, to blaspheme his holy name. As you think that over, oh, how your heart ought to burn with love to your Lord! You remember how Paul writes concerning adulterers, and drunkards, and all sorts of grossly sinful people, and then says, "Such were some of you, but ye are washed." This should bring tears to the eyes of all whom it concerns: "But ye are washed;"—you are singing your Saviour's praises, though, once, a profane or licentious song would have suited you better; you are now bowing your knees in prayer, though, once, those knees never knew what it was to make an obeisance before the Most High; you are loving him now with all your heart, though, once, you saw no

beauty in him that you should desire him. Brothers and sisters, I will not say that you ought to love Christ much; rather will I say that I feel sure that you do. If you realize what he has done for you, you cannot help loving him much; and I trust that, in the outpouring and manifestation of love, yours will be a life as vigorously good as once it was shamefully bad,—a life as full of the fire of heaven as once it was full of the fire of hell,—a life as much above the common life of men as once it was below what the life of men really ought to be. God grant that it may be so with you!

Now I will address myself to those who thank God—without any of the Pharisaic spirit,—but very humbly thank God that they were not allowed to run into the same excess of riot as others, but were early brought to a knowledge of the Saviour. I say to you, dear friends, that *you also may be among those who love Christ much, if you have a very deep sense of sin.* A venerable servant of God, whom most of you know and respect, has made a remark which I fully endorse. He says that he has noticed that the deepest convictions of sin do not come, as a rule, to men of coarse life, but to those who have been of upright moral character. My own observation has taught me that, very often, drunkards, and other persons who have lived openly evil lives, when they are converted, are brought on a sudden to Christ, and made to rejoice in him; while some of us, who were kept from such sins as they have committed, have had a far greater sense of horror and terror inflicted upon us than they have ever experienced. I have many times found that the deepest sense of sin has been felt where the actual sin has been the least. There are, no doubt, exceptions to this rule; but I believe it is the rule; and the explanation is, that the ungodly man, by a long life of sin, has so seared his conscience that, even when the Spirit of God comes to him, he has not that delicate, acute sense of sin which another man has, who, by God's grace, has never been permitted to blunt the edge of his conscience.

I will tell you another thing. I believe that, in many Christians, the sense of sin is much stronger ten years after they have been saved than it is at the time of their conversion. There is not any despair mixed with it, and the fear of punishment has gone; but a sense of horror at the terrible guilt of sin will sometimes come over a Christian who is far advanced in the divine life; nay, the further he is advanced in the divine life, the more will horror take hold of him whenever he sees sin, even in others, and still more in himself. Some glib professors talk of having got out of the 7th of Romans; I hope they will grow in grace until they get into the 7th of Romans! It seems to me as if they were in the 1st of Romans, so they have a long way to travel before they will get into the 7th of Romans. The nearer you get to perfection, the more horrified you feel because of the sin that still remains in you; and the more horror you feel at your sin, the more intense will be your gratitude to the bleeding Saviour who has put that sin away; and, in consequence, the more intense will be your love to him.

I charge you, Christian people, if you want your piety to be increased, never to blunt your sensibility of sin. Do not begin to

look at sin in any light which takes away any of its blackness. The devil himself is not so bad as sin is, for it is sin that made the devil. Satan was a holy angel until sin came into him, but sin itself was never anything else but sin,—a horrible thing, and it never will be anything else but sin, look at it in whatever way you may. Some have spoken of sin as being merely a failure, or a slight slip. God keep you, beloved, from ever using such language as that! Sin, in a child of God, is a damnable thing,—as damnable as it is most atrociously wicked; and if it were not for the grace of God, which takes it away, the brightest saint would soon be banished from God's presence. Sin is always an evil thing, but in a child of God it is a worse thing than in worldlings, for he sins against greater light and knowledge than they possess.

Brethren and sisters in Christ, if you desire to cultivate, as I trust you do, the feeling that you did owe your Lord five hundred pence, which he has freely forgiven you, *you must often think of the spirituality of the law of God.* We think, at first, that the ten commandments only mean what we see on the surface; and if we have not broken them, we feel happy; or if we have broken them, then we feel some conviction of sin; but the longer we live, and the more the Spirit of God deals with us, the more we discover that the law contains the condemnation of every evil thought, and temper, and imagination. Think, for instance, when we come to discover, in connection with the command, "Thou shalt not kill," that he who is angry with his brother without a cause is a murderer. Who among us has completely escaped that sin? Do angry thoughts never arise in our hearts? Ah, then we begin to discover that we have broken that command, and that, in this sense, we are murderers; and we find that there are more men, who have broken that law, than have been put to death by their fellow-men. It is just the same with each of the commandments. I need not go into the details of them; but may the Spirit of God make you often go into the details, till you look into your own life, and are horrified, and you say, "Why, where we fancied we saw righteousness, we see ourselves altogether condemned before the all-seeing eye of God."

If you would have a sense of sin, in the next place, *endeavour more and more to appreciate the excellency of God.* O thou holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts, when I think of some of thy creatures, and compare myself with them, self-conceit may set my mind at ease; but when I look up to thee, and remember that the heavens are not clean in thy sight, and that thou chargest thine angels with folly, I feel afraid to come into thy presence. In the visions of the night, when we have thought upon the purity and spirituality of God, our hair has been ready to stand on end as we have realized how far we are from such perfection as his, and we have been ready to cry, with Job, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." If the Holy Spirit will teach you to feel like that, then you will love Jesus Christ for having had pity upon you, and provided a way by which all your sinfulness could be taken away.

Another blessed sharpener of our sense of sin is *a consciousness of sin's tendency*,—knowing what sin really is, and what it would do if it could have its way without those blessed checks which omnipotence puts upon it. What would sin do, if it could? What did it do when God gave it liberty? It took God himself, and accused him, brought him before its bar; and there, the sinner dared to sit and judge his God,—yea, and to condemn his God, and even to slay his God. This is what sin always does whenever it can. "The fool" —that is, the ungodly man,—"hath said in his heart, There is no God." He means, "No God for me; I do not want any God. If I could have my own way, there should not be any God." And every offence against God's law is a wish, on our part, to be greater than God,—to have our way instead of God having his way;—in a word, to push God off his throne that we might sit there in his place. O sin, I cannot but hate thee, now that I see thee red with the blood of the Son of God! I cannot but abhor thee now that I see that thou wouldst let hell loose into this world if thou couldst do so. A Christian cannot help hating sin in proportion as he loves God who has forgiven him all his trespasses.

One thing which has often made me feel great tenderness of soul is *a sense of the divine love*. If you ever offend a person, and that person, instead of being in the slightest degree angry, lets fall a tear, but says nothing; and if you hear afterwards that he has been laying himself out for your good, and that the very thing, about which you were angry, was really intended to be a blessing to you, oh, you feel as if you could never forgive yourself! To do a wrong thing, is bad at any time; but to do a wrong to the One who is so good and so kind as God is,—oh, have you not often said to yourself, "How could I have done this? I was one of God's chosen people; he loved me before the foundation of the world, though I did not know it. Christ wrote my name on his hands, and on his heart, and shed his blood to redeem me; yet I did not know it. I even ridiculed his name; yet, all the while, he had prepared a place in heaven for me, and he had made up his mind that he would save me, that his grace should seek me. I did not know anything about it, and I went on in the frivolity and foolishness of my heart against him." This thought makes sin appear exceedingly sinful, as being committed against a God who is all goodness, and altogether love and mercy; and so we feel ourselves to be indebted five hundred pence, and not merely fifty.

Above all, dear friends, I know of nothing that can make us more sensitive about our guilt, and conscious of it, than *the realization of what Jesus Christ is to us*. I think this poor woman was helped to weep by the sight of his feet. They had not been pierced then; but I know that it helps us to weep in penitence when we can see his dear, his blessed feet that were pierced for our sins, and look upon his hands, and remember his words, "These are the wounds that I received in the house of my friends;" and then look into his side, and see that the gash goes right to his heart; and, all the while, realize that each of our sins became a nail, and unbelief the spear, to pierce his hands, and feet, and side. That wonderful

love of Jesus Christ to us has never changed, it has never been repressed by our ingratitude, or made to cease even by our forgetfulness of him. He loved us even to the death; and, after death, he has continued to love us still. He loves us so that he cannot be content even in heaven until he gets us there with him. Being himself there as our Head, he is determined to bring all his members there. Just look at Jesus Christ a minute, and then look at sin. Oh, what a loathsome thing, what a monster, it then appears! I am sure, dear friends, if you are beginning to think little of sin, it must be because you have been thinking little of Jesus Christ. You cannot have met your best Friend lately, or else you would never parley with his enemy. O beloved, lie in Christ's bosom, where all the sweetest perfumes are, rest your head upon his breast, where the myrrh, and aloes, and cassia are to be found; and you will never crave the leeks and garlic of Egypt! After having been with him, and eaten of the heavenly manna, you would not be able to eat the dust and ashes of this foul world. So, in proportion as you get near to Jesus, you will hate sin, and you will love him, who bore your sin, and carried it all away, that you might be free from it for ever.

There are many other topics I might mention so as to sharpen your sense of sin; but I pray the ever-blessed Spirit to keep your mind and heart sensitive towards sin, for be you sure of this,—that you can never exaggerate your own guiltiness in God's sight. When you have the lowest notion of yourself, you are getting the nearest to the truth; when you feel your sin to be exceeding sinful, you do not even yet know how sinful it is; for—

"God only knows the love of God,"—

and God only knows the sinfulness of man. Perhaps, if any man among us could see his sin as it really is, he would go mad. I am persuaded that, sometimes, God spares men, who have been great sinners, the horrible revelations which he gives to others, because they could not bear them. If they did ever see themselves as they are, they might be driven to despair. So he sometimes leads them by easier ways than he does some others, and he thus gives to others the opportunity of putting themselves down among the five hundred pence debtors, and to love him most because, after all, they are conscious of having had the most forgiven.

III. My time has fled, so I must only say very briefly, in the third place, that IF WE GET A BURNING LOVE FOR JESUS CHRIST, IT WILL BE WELL FOR US TO SHOW IT AS THIS WOMAN DID. How shall we do it?

First, *by desiring to be near him.* This woman, in her desire to be near Christ, came right up to his feet. Augustine admires the gracious audacity of this woman. She had been very bold when she was a sinner; her shamefacedness was gone when she was a sinner, and it was also gone when she was a saint. May we, too, love Christ so much that we cannot be content to live at a distance from him, but may we be amongst those who follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, and abide close beside him!

The next point in her for us to imitate is *the boldness of her*

confession. Some of Christ's disciples came to him by night, but this woman came to him by day. They dared not approach him when anybody saw them, but she cared not who saw her. I would that you, who love Jesus much, were as bold as she was in the acknowledgment of your faith. Come out, and confess Christ, saying, "I have had much forgiven; therefore, I will tell the whole world of what the Lord has done for me."

Then, next, *this woman had deep humility;* for, bold as she was, she rendered the lowliest service that she could to Christ. May you be such willing slaves to him that washing his feet will be the work in which you delight! If I may but wash his feet,—help his poor people,—look after a few infants in the Sunday-school,—do any little thing for him,—if I can only have some smiles from him, though they be only such as come to menials, I will be glad to get them.

Then, *imitate this woman's penitence.* She bathed his feet with her tears; so do you show him how deep and true is your repentance. It is well not to make a show of repentance to men, except by your actions; but let your whole life, and your inmost soul, make a show of it before Christ. Wash his feet with your tears; with your contrition, refresh him.

After washing his feet with her tears, this woman wiped them with the hairs of her head. *Imitate her self-denying service.* Show your love to Jesus in some special way. I do not know what particular form your service may take; but let it be some loving, tender, self-denying work for your dear Lord and Saviour. Make a perfect consecration of yourself to him, as this woman did; may the Holy Spirit help you to do so! But you will never do it unless you have a deep sense of sin; so, brothers and sisters in Christ, I come back to that point, because that is the chief thought I want to leave in your mind. Do feel sin to be a bitter and hideous thing, and do feel yourself to be a great sinner. You will never pray so well as when you have a tear in your eye. You will never serve God so well as when you have been standing in the publican's place, and saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner." I am persuaded that we, ministers, do not preach with effect if we preach as if we were wonderful saints looking down on you, poor sinners. Oh, no! When we are ourselves tender in spirit, God helps us to be tender to the humble and contrite among our hearers; out of our hearts, by the gracious working of the Holy Spirit, comes power that helps others to be humble and contrite before God. We are nothing to boast of, so let us never boast. Though we are accepted in the Beloved, and perfect in Christ Jesus, forgiven, saved for ever, (blessed be his name!) yet this is no reason for us to lift ourselves up, but to lift Christ up. It is a cause for gratitude, but not for conceit; so we will feel that we have had much forgiven, and will love him much who has freely forgiven us all our trespasses. May he help us to do so, and his shall be the praise for ever and ever! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

PSALM CXVI.

In this Psalm, David tells us his experience with regard to God and with regard to men.

Verse 1. *I love the LORD, because he hath heard my voice and my supplications.*

Answered prayer is a good reason for loving God. David was in his right senses; and he was, by no means, a fool; yet he declared that God had answered his prayer, and, therefore, he loved him. And this is not only David's experience, but there are thousands of us who can say that God has heard our prayers, and therefore we love him. How can we help doing so?

2. *Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live.*

If a beggar in the street were to say to us, "Because you have relieved me once, I will beg of you as long as I live," we should not be pleased to hear him say that; but God loves to hear us say that to him. He wishes us to resolve that, because we have been successful in prayer once, we will call upon him as long as we live.

Now David explains the circumstances which led him to pray:—

3. *The sorrows of death compassed me,—*

"I seemed to be shut in,—surrounded by a circle of difficulties and terrors: 'The sorrows of death compassed me,'"—

3. *And the pains of hell gat hold upon me:*

They seemed to seize him as a lion seizes his prey.

3, 4. *I found trouble and sorrow. Then called I upon the name of the LORD; O LORD, I beseech thee, deliver my soul.*

His prayer was a very short one, but very much to the point. Words make not prayer; they often burden it, and prevent it from flying.

"Prayer is the soul's sincere desire;"—

and David, in a few earnest words, expressed that desire: "O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul."

5. *Gracious is the LORD, and righteous; yea, our God is merciful.*

All who have ever tried him have proved him to be so,—merciful to forgive our sin,—merciful to help us in the time of trouble,—merciful to strengthen us in the performance of our duty: "Our God is merciful."

6. *The LORD preserveth the simple:*

Those who are of a single mind,—who have no double meanings and concealed motives,—those who know their own ignorance and weakness, and who, therefore, dare not trust in themselves.

6. *I was brought low, and he helped me.*

David could speak for himself, and he did so without the slightest hesitation. Can you, dear friends, after making trial of God's love and grace, say of him, "I was brought low, and he helped me"? If you can, then bear this testimony to his praise and glory.

7. *Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the LORD hath dealt bountifully with thee.*

Man's soul is like the dove that Noah sent out from the ark. It flew over the wide waste of waters, seeking rest, but finding none; so, at last, with weary wing, it made its way back to the ark; and, soul, thou wilt

never rest till thou comest back to thy Creator and Redeemer. Thou mayest fly to the pleasures and follies of this world, but they can furnish no real rest for thee; if thou wouldst rest, thou must come back to thy God.

8, 9. *For thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling. I will walk before the* LORD *in the land of the living.*

"Let my fellow-creatures think what they will of me, I will not care about their judgments, I will only think of God." This is the highest, noblest, happiest style of living,—to "walk before the Lord." Why, there are some men who dare not even call their souls their own! They are afraid of their next-door neighbours, or of some great kinsman who sets the fashion for them; but the man who walks before the Lord will think only of the verdict of the Most High, and will care nothing about what men will say.

10, 11. *I believed, therefore have I spoken: I was greatly afflicted: I said in my haste, All men are liars.*

He felt that he could not trust them. He had come into such trouble that men would be deceivers even against their own will; for, even when they would have helped him, he found that they could not. He had looked to them as worthy of his confidence, and had found them fail him; therefore he said that, so far as reliance upon them was concerned, "All men are liars." Well, what then?

12. *What shall I render unto the* LORD *for all his benefits toward me?*

"Though men have failed me, the Lord has not. If friends all prove to be false, he still is true. 'What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me?'"

13—15. *I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the* LORD. *I will pay my vows unto the* LORD *now in the presence of all his people. Precious in the sight of the* LORD *is the death of his saints.*

It matters not where they die,—in the dungeons of the Inquisition, or on the sick-bed of poverty and obscurity,—God is always with them. The death-bed of a saint is one of the places where God often makes his glory to be best seen. From the lips of dying men and women some of us have heard strange sayings, sweeter than any that ever fell from poet's tongue or pen. We have heard words which it was almost unlawful for a man to utter, save only for those who were in the very suburbs of heaven,—almost in glory,—even while they spake with us on earth.

"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." Will yours be a saintly death, dear friend, or will it, on the other hand, be a death of gloom and sorrow? God grant that you may die the death of his people because you have lived the life of his people!

16. *O* LORD, *truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid: thou hast loosed my bonds.*

How pleased David was to be God's servant! Yet he says, "Thou hast loosed my bonds." To serve God, is to be free; we are never truly free until we bow our willing necks to the yoke of the Most High. Then we break every chain, and snap every fetter. He is the free man whom our God makes free, and all are slaves besides.

17—19. *I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the* LORD. *I will pay my vows unto the* LORD *now in the presence of all his people, in the courts of the* LORD'S *house, in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem. Praise ye the* LORD.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—411, 606, 538.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

PRECEPTS AND PROMISES.

A Sermon

PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MARCH 10TH, 1904,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, February 13th, 1876.

"If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour."—John xii. 26.

I HAVE already said, in expounding the chapter from which my text is taken, that the sight of these Greeks, who desired to see Jesus, seems to have very greatly affected our Saviour's mind. He had not had much to do with Gentiles; for, as far as his personal ministry upon the earth was concerned, he was not sent to the Gentiles, but only "to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." But now he sees, in those enquiring Greeks, the advance guard of that mighty host of Gentiles who, for these eighteen hundred years and more, have continued to seek him out, and to call him their Leader, and Friend, and Saviour. The thought of this great result of his life's work naturally led him also to think of the cross from which that result would spring. "These are the redeemed," he seemed to say to himself; "then, it is time for me to think of the redemption which I have yet to present on their behalf. These are the first-fruits of my great harvest; then I must see to the sowing of the seed; and I must set my mind steadfastly to think of that sowing, for except the corn of wheat be cast into the ground, and die, it abideth alone." So he began to feel the throes of desire for that baptism wherewith he was to be baptized; for the joy that was set before him was just then clearer than usual,—the joy of winning souls, and, especially, the joy of winning Gentile nations unto God; and, therefore, his mind fixed itself more than ever upon the plan by which his people's redemption was to be achieved. Hence, I think, arose the words to which I called your attention while we were reading the chapter.

The sight of these Greeks also led the Saviour to feel that he must again explain the conditions upon which he could receive disciples. There have been religious teachers who have been content to gather

followers through falsehood or error. They have never properly explained what allegiance to them meant, or they have caught men by craft and guile. Our Lord Jesus Christ never did that. He said to any who proposed to follow him, "Have you counted the cost?" He bade them not to begin to build their house if they were not able to finish it, nor to commence a warfare in which they could not reasonably expect victory. It seemed, sometimes, to be rather repelling men than attracting them to say to would-be disciples, "If you will follow me, do this, and do that,"—perhaps, some very trying ordeal; yet that was the Saviour's usual habit. So, now, lest these Greeks should say that they would become his disciples, without knowing what discipleship involved, he said to them, "I, myself, will have to die in order that I may produce others like myself; and you, if you become my disciples, will have to follow me in this respect as well as in all other things; you will have to deny yourselves, and to undergo self-sacrifice; for, otherwise, if you will not do this, it is no use for you to pretend to be my servants, for my servants you cannot be. If any man would serve me, he must follow me." It was the coming of these Greeks to Christ which led to the utterance of these words; and that incident, in a measure, explains them. Now may the Spirit of God impress the Saviour's words upon your hearts as I try to speak to you about them!

Our text is divided into three sentences. The first is *a sentence of precept:* "If any man serve me, let him follow me." The second is *a sentence of precept and promise*, for, to this day, no scholar can tell whether it ought to be rendered, "Where I am, there *let* my servant be," or, "Where I am, there *shall* also my servant be." Either may be a correct interpretation of the original; and, therefore, I take it in both senses as a sentence of precept and promise. Then the third is *a sentence of pure promise:* "If any man serve me, him will my Father honour."

I. First, then, we have A SENTENCE OF PRECEPT. "If any man serve me, let him follow me."

The Greek term, used here, might be translated, "If anyone will become a deacon,—do a deacon's work, be my minister, my servant, and wait upon me,—then, let him follow me;" by which is intended, first, that, *if you become Christ's servant, you must obey him.* This does not seem to occur to many professing Christians. They say they are Christians, and, therefore, Christ's servants; yet they dare to sit in judgment upon him, and upon his precepts. They are a law unto themselves; they obey this precept because they like it, and they disobey that other precept because they do not like it. They call him Master and Lord; but he is not really their Master and Lord, for they do not obey him. Paul rightly says, "To whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey;" but if you simply take the name of Christ upon you, and call yourself his servant, yet do not obey him, but follow your own whim, or your own hereditary prejudice, or the custom of some erroneous church, you are no servant of Christ. If you really are a servant of Christ, your first duty is to obey him.

In the Church of Christ, he is the only Legislator. Not all the bishops, and clergy, nor the whole Church, if it could be summoned in one solemn conclave, could pass an ordinance that would have even the slightest force upon a Christian's conscience, if it were contrary to the teachings of Christ himself. There is but one Head of the Church,—one spiritual Rabbi, and infallible Teacher, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ himself; and we are to understand, when we enter his Church, and enlist under his banner, that we are to serve him, and him alone. We may serve others, as far as they are commissioned by him, and as far as what they say is in harmony with his teaching, but no farther; for "one is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren." Did you understand that, young man, when you became a Christian? Did you understand that, my sister, when you professed to be a follower of Christ? I am afraid some professing Christians did not. I bless God that this was one of the things which I learned when first I trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as my Saviour. I felt, "Now I am going to be Christ's disciple, through his grace; and I am going to do, as far as the Holy Spirit will help me, everything that I believe he commands me to do." I turned to the New Testament, and read it for myself. I did not enquire of this teacher or that, but said to myself, "What does Jesus say? I will find out what he has revealed as his will concerning me." This way of acting gives a man independence of mind towards his fellow-men, and, at the same time, humble yet firm confidence in what he does in the sight of God. When he knows that he has submitted himself to the teaching of Christ, and that he would not knowingly hold anything that Christ would not endorse, and would not willingly either himself learn or impart to others anything that Jesus Christ does not teach, it gives him a firm footing in the things of God. Christian men and women, do you stand thus firmly? You know that many of you do not. You have another book, besides the Bible, which is your guide. The Bible alone is not the religion of many professing Christians. It is of some; but there are many who have another book, to which they bow with almost equal reverence; and courts of law have to decide as to the shape of this garment or the other, or whether they shall turn their noses to the East or to the West, for they cannot do anything without calling in lawyers and judges. Yet the Bible alone is quite enough, God knows; and if we did but follow its guidance, it would lead us rightly enough. I call you back, Christian men and women, to your allegiance to God's Holy Word. You owe none to any book except the one that he has given; and you are to regard no teaching but the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ, and that which comes to you upon his sole authority. In this respect, he says to you, "If any man serve me, let him follow me;" that is, by obedience to his commands.

The next teaching of the text is this. If any man serve Christ, *his service will be most like his Lord's when he does, as nearly as he can, what Christ did.* He is your Master, but he is also your Exemplar. Suppose that you say to him, "Blessed Lord Jesus, I am willing to obey thee, but what is thy law?" He replies, "I am

my own law; imitate me; follow me." If you want to obey Jesus instead of merely keeping the law written upon stones, you can see the law written out in his life.

> "My dear Redeemer and my Lord,
> I read my duty in thy Word;
> But in thy life the law appears
> Drawn out in living characters."

If you would obey Christ, and so serve him, be like him, for the sum and substance of his teaching is, "Follow me." Watch, then, his every footstep, and ask for grace to put your foot down where he put his. Whatever you see to be his temper under any circumstances, cultivate that temper when you are in similar circumstances. If you want to know what you should do at any special time, think what he would have done if he had been in your place; for what he would have done is what you should do. And if you know that any course that you are pursuing would not have been pursued by Christ, and would not have been according to his mind, do not follow it any longer. If it is not in harmony with Christ's life, it is not the way for you to walk. If it is not that which you would have done if Christ stood by you, and looked at you with his tender but piercing eye of everlasting love,—if it is not what you would have done in his immediate personal presence, do not do it, for it is clearly not what you ought to do. You are his servant, so you are to obey him; and, in order to obey him, you are to imitate him.

I must, however, warn you, dear friends, that if you do this,—and you must, if you mean to be his faithful follower, for this is the only way of being Christ's servant, indeed and of a truth,—this following of Christ will bring you into very much the same condition as that in which your Lord was, that is, you will become a marked man. In the midst of the company that you frequent, you will be a speckled bird. You will not need to adopt any different mode of dress, for Jesus did not. He wore the common garb of the country, and dressed just like any other man of his class. He affected no singularity in meat, or drink, or language, but he was singular, essentially, because the greatest singularity under heaven is holiness. If you will just do the right, and be the right, before God, men will soon find you out, and you will first become the subject of their observation,—by-and-by, of their reproach,—perhaps, also, of persecution; but, whatever the consequences are, this is what you have to do. Hear what your Lord says:—"If any man serve me, let him follow me." "But, Lord, thou hadst to go without the camp." "Then, follow me there." "But, Lord, thou hadst to endure the cross." "And he, who would be my disciple, must take up his cross daily, and come and follow me." You cannot be Christ's servant if you are not willing to follow him, cross and all. What do you crave? A crown? Then it must be a crown of thorns if you are to be like him. Do you want to be lifted up? So you shall, but it will be upon a cross. In following Christ, you must be prepared to suffer persecution, loss, and, if need be, even death itself.

Will you have Christ as your Lord and Master on these terms? If not, you cannot have him at all. He does not want, as his followers, cowards who will sneak away from him as soon as the first shot in the battle is fired. He does not want another Judas, who will sell him for the price of a slave. He wants true-hearted men, who are determined, out of love to his glorious character, and devotion to his divine mission, that they will follow him because they desire to serve him.

Our Lord would also have us understand that, if we mean to be his servants, we must follow him even to the extent of being put into the ground to die,—that is, self-sacrifice, self-abnegation, and even self-annihilation. Our Lord Jesus Christ is at his best when he makes himself of no reputation. I do not know any time when Christ seems so glorious as when he lays aside all his glory, and takes upon himself all our shame; so, brethren, if you would follow Christ, you are not to bargain to be honoured. On the contrary, you are to commence to strip off from yourself the garments of honour. You are not to bargain for ease, but are to put on the harness of a warrior who will get but little rest, and who must constantly be on the watch. You are not to stipulate for this indulgence or that. What indulgence had your Lord? He had not where to lay his head. His life was spent amidst poverty and hardship. He kept nothing back from the sons of men; he emptied himself that we might be filled. There was not a grain of self-seeking in him. He saved others; himself he could not save. Oh, that we had even a few Christians who were like their Master in this respect! Few are there, in these evil days, who seem willing to sacrifice all for Christ's sake. The brave Covenanters could give up house, and home, and everything, and die for King Jesus on Scotland's bleak mountains; but we, in these easier times, are content to make money, as other people do; to live in ease and luxury, as other people do; to contribute our cheese-parings and our candle-ends to the cause of Christ, and to think that we have done a great deal if we have done even as much as that. But where is the self-sacrifice? Where is the burying of one's self in the ground to die, like a corn of wheat? Where is the wish—the willingness—to lose reputation, to sever friendships, to sacrifice respect, to endure hardness, so that we may be true to our conscience, faithful to our Lord Jesus Christ? May the Lord soon raise up amongst us more men of noble principle, who will count God, and Christ, and truth, and eternity, to be worth living for, and worth dying for, and who will count all things else but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord!

I will leave that first sentence of my text when I have made one more observation upon it. Perhaps somebody says, "I want to serve Christ, and I am willing to make some self-denial for his sake. I have been thinking about saving my money, and building a church or a chapel." Possibly, another friend says, "I want to serve Christ, so I should like to give a painted window in his honour." Yes, but Christ himself says to you, "If any man serve me, let him follow me." The very best way of serving Christ is to do just what Christ

was accustomed to do, so far as that is possible to you. This is a very blessed text for a poor man, for a sick man, for an illiterate man,—in fact, for every man who really wants to serve Christ. If I want to serve Christ, what have I to do? To follow him. If I am very ill, how am I to follow him? Why, by bearing the affliction as patiently as he would have borne it. If I am very poor, how am I to follow him? Why, by trusting in God, as he did. Suppose that I am very much maligned and slandered, what am I to do? I am to try to bear it as meekly as he would have borne it. You can accomplish a great deal, in that way, if you really try to do it. You nursery maids, and you other servants who have to work hard to earn your daily bread,—and you boys and girls, who are still at school,—there is something that you can be, or do, or suffer, by which you may prove your love to Christ, and that something is the best way in which you can follow him. It is sometimes the case that a person says, "I want to serve Christ, so I shall go into a nunnery, or into a monastery." Now, let me just ask this question, —Did our Lord Jesus Christ ever act like that? He said, "If any man serve me, let him follow me." Can you imagine Christ shutting himself up in a monastery? What! The great battle of the ages to be fought, and the Captain of our salvation concealing himself, and so setting us an example of how to be cowardly? You know he did not do that; so fight it out, man, even as he did, and do not go sneaking away, and hiding yourself, under the pretence of so serving the Lord Jesus Christ. That is sheer selfishness, and there is a far better course than that for you to take. Give yourself up wholly to Jesus, and do as Jesus would have done if he had been in your place, for so you will serve him in the best possible fashion.

II. Now I turn to the second clause of my text, which seems to me to be both A PRECEPT AND A PROMISE.

First, read it as *a precept:* "Where I am, there *let* my servant be." Wherever Jesus was, and is, there you are to be, if you are really his servant.

In his relationship to God, how did Jesus stand? Well, he was whole-hearted in his consecration; be you likewise. He began his public life by being baptized in Jordan, saying to John, "Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." Do you act in the same way if you are really his servant. He came out into the midst of mankind to bear witness for God's truth, and he kept on bearing that witness, and was content to be found in his place, as the faithful Witness, when the time came for him to seal his testimony with his blood. Be you a witness-bearer for him, whatever that witness-bearing may cost you.

> "Cold mountains and the midnight air
> Witnessed the fervour of his prayer;"—

so let midnight witness the fervour of your prayer, too. The attitude of Jesus towards God is shown by his saying in the garden of Gethsemane, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt." Servant of Christ, be thou also found in the same attitude; bow before the Lord in the spirit of resignation to his holy will even though it should bring

the death-sweat to your brow. Whatever it involves, mind that you say to God, "Thy will be done." Wherever you see the Lord Jesus Christ in his relationship towards God,—with the one exception of his substitutionary sacrifice for sinners, in which you cannot follow him,—in everything else, if you would really serve him, follow him; where the Master is, there let his servant be.

Then, next, what was Christ's position with regard to men? He was in the midst of them, and in all his relationships he was always the example of what his servants should be. As a child, he was subject to his parents. Godly children, that is what Christ would have you also to be. As a child, he grew in the knowledge and understanding of the Word, and in favour with God and with men. So seek, dear young people, to be ever making progress in the divine life, and to be growing up, as Christ did, well-pleasing unto God. When he had reached maturity, what was his attitude towards men? Why, he was the Lover of men; seldom angry with them, but often bearing their reproach; never selfish, but always ignoring himself, and living entirely for others. Someone has called him "the great Philanthropist." I hardly like such a title for him, for he rises far above all ordinary philanthropy; yet is it true that no one else ever loved men as he loved them, and no one else ever made such sacrifices for them. Be you like to Jesus in this respect also; and wherever you see the print of his feet, seek to set your feet there. Wherever there was a battle to be fought for truth and right, Christ was always to the front; and wherever there was reproach to be borne for God's sake, Christ was ready to bear it. The Pharisees could not silence him, the Herodians could not make him seek to escape. He was ready for every emergency that arose. Did God want a Witness? There was Christ. Did man need a Teacher? There was Christ? Were men sick? He was their Physician. Were they hungry? He was their Provider. Were his disciples liable to sink in a storm? He walked on the waters, and rescued the frightened men. He was ever giving himself to the service of men; and, beloved, wherever your Master was, in relation to men, there should you be. If you can conceive of a place where Christ would not go, do not you go there. If you know of any company where Christ would not be found, do not you be found there. But if you know of a place where Christ could go, there you also can go with safety; for it is your business to be where your Master would have been if he had been in your place, and never to be where your Master would not have gone.

We have thus looked at this sentence as a precept, now let us regard it as *a promise:* "Where I am, there *shall* also my servant be." This is a very blessed promise; I do not recollect one that has more sweetness in it to my heart. We expect, brethren,—unless Christ shall speedily come,—we expect to die. When we fall asleep in Jesus, we shall be carried to the grave, even as Jesus was. We shall be in good company. It is, to my mind, a beautiful thought that, when our Lord rose from the dead, he took off the grave clothes, and left them in his sepulchre, and he unwound the napkin that was about his head, and laid it by itself. So the grave is not

an empty tenement without furniture. Christ has left the linen in which he slept to wrap his followers in; and he has put the napkin by itself, for those who are left behind to wipe their eyes with it. We rightly sing, with good Dr. Watts,—

"The graves of all his saints he bless'd,
And soften'd every bed:
Where should the dying members rest,
But with the dying Head?"

Where will our spirits be when we have left the body behind? We do not know much about the unseen world, but we are content with what Richard Baxter sings,—

"My knowledge of that life is small,
The eye of faith is dim;
But 'tis enough that Christ knows all,
And I shall be with him."

Our Saviour's words are certainly true, "Where I am, there shall also my servant be." Some people are anxious to know more concerning the condition of the redeemed between death and the resurrection; but, my dear brethren, I am satisfied to know that I shall be with Jesus, where he is. I feel like the little child, who had been a long while away from its mother, and who was told that it should soon go home to her. That was all the child wanted, to be in mother's bosom; and all I want is to be with Jesus. This he has promised us, and this is our comfort, "Where I am, there shall also my servant be." As soon as ever we fall asleep in him, absent from the body, we are present with the Lord.

What about the resurrection? Well, Jesus rose, and so, in due time, our bodies also shall rise. These very bodies of ours,—for Christ has redeemed, not a part of our manhood, but the whole of it, and these bodies of ours are the temple of the Holy Ghost,—they shall rise again, and in our flesh we shall see God; and so shall we be "for ever with the Lord."

But what is heaven, brethren, and what will eternal glory be? Although eye hath not seen, nor hath ear heard, nor heart of man conceived what God hath prepared for them that love him, he hath revealed it unto us by his Spirit; at least, in part; but it is enough for us to know that we shall be with Jesus, where he is, that we may behold his glory. It is wonderful what new discoveries are constantly being made; many books have come out, lately, filled with what I believe to be nothing but rubbish; but, for my part, I do not care about where I am going to be in the millennium or afterwards, for I know that I shall be with my Lord, and I want nothing else. I do not stipulate for a golden harp, or a place by the sea of glass; I do not ask even to be amongst the angels; I am quite content with my Lord's promise, "Where I am, there shall also my servant be." My Lord and I shall fare alike; and it will do for me if it will do for him. Are you not of the same mind, beloved, and is not this all you wish to know about the future, that you shall be with him, where he is, and behold his glory?

III. Now, thirdly, we have A SENTENCE WHICH IS ALTOGETHER A PROMISE: "If any man serve me, him will my Father honour."

Brethren, if you serve Christ in the way I have feebly tried to describe, that is, by an out-and-out consecration of yourself to him, and to his service, you will not get much honour among men. You know what many want, at the present day, in a minister. He must have no principles at all; or, if he has any, he must keep them to himself, and never say anything about them. Above all, he must be perfectly unsectarian, and never say a word against any error. Do you not know that it is uncharitable to attack what others believe? Preach always what everybody would like you to preach. If you see anything wrong, put the telescope up to your blind eye, as Nelson did; then you will find all the brethren will praise you because you praise them. Pat them on the back, and they will pat you on the back, and you will get through the world very smoothly. I know that path, and I know how many friends we might have if we would but follow it,—wriggle in and out, and be anything, and everything, or nothing, just to suit the tastes of others. But, brethren, if you believe anything to be true, and stick to it, some will call you sectarian, and others will be offended at you; but, mark this, if you do not get any praise from men for clinging to the right, you will have an easy conscience. I would sooner have all the demons in hell enraged against me, and all the dogs on earth howling at me, than feel that I had kept back anything I believed to be true.

If we do what our conscience tells us is right, if we serve Christ outright, and follow him fully, *God will honour us by setting his seal upon our work.* If you preach Christ, and not the fancies of men, God will give you souls, make you useful, and help you to build up his people. That is the honour which you will receive. Faithfulness will not be without its reward. "In due season, ye shall reap, if ye faint not."

Then, by-and-by, it will come to pass that even those, who censured you as too strict, too punctilious, and, perhaps, litigious, will come round to see that you are truthful and right; and, so, *God will give you honour in their sight.* It is wonderful how even bad men are compelled to honour consistency and uprightness. They may hate it, but they respect it. Whereas, if you do not follow Christ fully, and do not act as his servants should, God will not honour you, neither will men do so long, for they will find you out; and then they will drive you from them in derision.

The best honour that comes from God will come to his people by-and-by. I have been thinking over those words, "If any man serve me, him will my Father honour;" and I feel that I cannot preach from them at all. What would some people think if the Queen were to honour them? But what is that compared with our Father, who is in heaven, honouring us? I do not know whether you can conceive what it means; I cannot. God makes his creature love him, but for him to honour that creature,—to put honour upon him,—is something so wonderful that I am lost in contemplation of it. Yet he will do it. If you faithfully serve Jesus Christ

on earth, God will bid the angels make way for you in heaven. While you live here, they will be your servants; and when you ascend to heaven, you shall have a place nearer to the eternal throne than even they have; and then, in the presence of all the holy angels, God will do you honour, and your spirit shall be known among them as one that God loves. "What shall be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour?" was the question asked of old; but I put another question, "What shall be done unto the man whom the eternal God, the Creator, the Possessor of heaven and earth, delighteth to honour?" Do you aspire to that honour? Are you ambitious to share it? Then, you have only to do this, serve Christ faithfully, follow Christ fully.

Some of you cannot do this,—you who are not renewed in heart and life. I might as well urge the dead to dance as bid you attempt this, for you cannot do it. You must believe in Jesus; you must be born again, and receive the new life. But, oh, you who have believed in him, remember that this is your road to honour,—willingness to be dishonoured, willingness to be counted as the mire in the street for Christ's sake and for truth's sake! Then, let this be your strong resolution that, come what may, Christ's life shall be your rule, Christ's word shall be your marching orders; and whether you have to die a martyr's death, or not, to him, who loved you, and bought you with his blood, you consecrate yourself entirely, henceforth and for ever.

May God raise up many who will feel the power of these words! If we only get a few of such men, who will follow the Lord fully, happy will be the churches to which they belong, blessed will be the age in which they live, highly privileged will be the land in which they dwell, for such men are God's heroes. These are the soldiers who will stand firm in the day of battle, and who will help to save our country from ever becoming Popish again. May we have many such men, and many such women, in every age till Jesus comes, and glory dawns! May this be your happy lot, my dear brethren and sisters, for Christ's sake! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

JOHN XII. 20—41.

Our Lord had raised Lazarus from the dead, and this miracle had excited great attention in Jerusalem. In consequence of this, the people had led him in triumph through the streets, and everywhere there was great excitement. Everybody was speaking of the wonderful miracle which he had wrought.

Verses 20, 21. *And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast: the same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus.*

There is no doubt that these men were Gentiles,—probably proselytes. They had come up to worship at the feast, and their curiosity had been excited, and their interest had been awakened, by what they had seen and heard about Jesus. There appears to have been at least some measure of reverence for him in their minds. Hence they addressed one of his disciples,

whose purely Greek name may lead us to suppose that he had some Greek relatives; they said to Philip, "Sir, we would see Jesus."

22, 23. *Philip cometh and telleth Andrew: and again Andrew and Philip tell Jesus. And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified.*

They did not expect him to say that. Surely, the coming of a few Greeks to see him was not very much in the way of glorification. But, to him, the coming of these Greeks was a sort of prophecy of the myriads of other Gentiles who would, by-and-by, come to his feet; and, therefore, he looked forward to that death which should be the means of their salvation. Christ came into the world to preach the gospel, but he came on a greater errand than that, namely, to provide a gospel that could be preached; and he knew that the time was approaching when he must provide that gospel by dying upon the cross. See how he proceeds:—

24. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.*

The preservation of the corn is the prevention of its increase; but the putting of it into the ground, the losing of it, the burial of it, is the very means of its multiplication. So, our Lord Jesus Christ must not care for himself, and he did not. He surrendered himself to all the ignominy of the death of the cross, he died, and was buried in the heart of the earth; but he sprang up again from the grave, and ever since then myriads have come to him through his death, even as these Greeks came to him in his life Now, as it was with Christ, so is it to be with us; at least, in our measure.

25. *He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.*

His love is ruinous to his true life; but to destroy self-love, to make a sacrifice of ourselves, is the truest way really to preserve ourselves.

26, 27. *If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour. Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour.*

This seems to be a sort of rehearsal of the dread scene soon to be enacted in Gethsemane. At the sight of these Greeks, our Saviour seems to have been led specially to think, as we have already said, of that death by which they, and multitudes like them were to be redeemed. Thinking of it, he enters so fully into it, by a sort of foretaste, that he feels something of the same shiver and throe of anguish which came upon him in Gethsemane. He seems to say here, "Father, save me from this hour," just as he said there, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me." Yet he says here, "But for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name;"—just as he afterwards said in the garden, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt."

28, 29. *Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again. The people therefore, that stood by, and heard it, said that it thundered: others said, An angel spake to him.*

This was the third time that mysterious voice had been heard;—first, at his baptism; the second time, on the Mount of Transfiguration; and, now, a few days before he died upon the cross. The voice of God had been heard on a much earlier occasion,—at Sinai; and then it was attended with thunder, as it was here. Those who had not ears to understand the voice of God only perceived the loudness of its thunder peals; but there were others, like John himself, who understood what the Lord said: "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again."

30, 31. *Jesus answered and said, This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes. Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out.*

The old Roman empire seemed to stand as fast as the eternal hills, but God had come to judge the whole state of affairs as it was then in the world; and, inasmuch as Christ the pure and perfect Son of God was condemned to die, that action condemned the society of that period. Yea, the whole of the ungodly world, in taking its part in crucifying Christ, bore evidence against itself, and pronounced sentence upon itself as being guilty of the death of the Christ of God. "Now shall the prince of this world be cast out." The overthrow of the usurper began from that time, and that overthrow of the devil is still going on; and, blessed be God, it will reach its completion one of these days, and we shall yet rejoice in a new heaven, and a new earth, on which the trail of the serpent shall never be traced.

32. *And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.*

Christ on the cross draws all men up to himself. I have heard this text quoted as if it referred to Christ being extolled in preaching. Well, it is true that, when Christ is lifted up in the ministry, there is an attractive power; but that is not the first meaning of the text. Let us read on:—

33. *This he said, signifying what death he should die.*

He alluded to his crucifixion, which is the great attractive centre of mankind.

34—36. *The people answered him, We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth for ever: and how sayest thou, The Son of man must be lifted up? who is this Son of man? Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light.*

It is always well to use the light that we already have. If any man will use the light he already has, God will be sure to give him more. That is a good saying of an old Puritan, "If thou hast starlight, thank God for it, and he will give thee moonlight; and when thou hast moonlight, give thanks to God for it, and he will give thee sunlight." And so it shall be. Nothing is worse than sinning against light. If it is only the light of conscience, even if you know it is not perfect, yet, nevertheless, never sin against it; for, if you do, you will quench it; and to quench the light you have, is the way to effectually prevent your having any more: "While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light."

36—41. *These things spake Jesus, and departed, and did hide himself from them. But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him: that the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him.*

There is such a thing as judicial blindness. If men can see, and yet will not see, God is at last so provoked by their wickedness that he takes away the light altogether, and removes from them the very faculty of sight. It is not surprising that it should be so, for it was so with the generation in which Christ lived. They had so long rejected the true prophet,—so long refused to listen to the voice of God, that, at last, he abandoned them to their own ways; and nothing worse can happen to a man than to be abandoned of God. If God casts thee off, thou art lost indeed.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

CONFIRMING THE WITNESS OF CHRIST.

A Sermon

PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MARCH 17TH, 1904,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

"Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you."—1 Cor. i. 6.

IT is not always the most gifted church which is in the most healthy state. A church may have many rich, influential, or learned members; many that have the gift of utterance, and understand all sciences; yet that church may be in an unhealthy condition. Such was the case with the church at Corinth. Paul, in the opening of his Epistle, tells them that he thanks God always on their behalf for the grace of God given unto them by Christ Jesus, that in everything they were enriched in all utterance, and in all knowledge, so that they were behind in no gift, waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Corinthians were what we should call nowadays, judging them by the usual standard, a first-class church. They had many who understood much of the learning of the Greeks; they were men of classic taste, and men of good understanding, men of profound knowledge; and yet, in spiritual health, that church was one of the worst in all Greece, and perhaps in the world. Amongst the whole of them, you would not find another church sunk so low as this one, although it was the most gifted.

What should this teach us? Should it not show us that gifts are nothing, unless they are laid on the altar of God; that it is nothing to have the gift of oratory; that it is nothing to have the power of eloquence; that it is nothing to have learning; that it is nothing to have influence, unless they all be dedicated to God, and consecrated to his service? I said, "it is nothing;" I mean, it is nothing good. Alas! it is worse than nothing good; it is something evil, it is something dreadful, it is something terrible for a man to have these gifts, and yet to misuse them; for they shall only furnish fuel for a fiercer flame than he would have endured had he not possessed such abilities. He who buries his ten talents may well expect to be given over to the tormentor.

This is the next lesson that is taught us,—let us never judge men

by their talents, but by the use which they make of their powers, by the end to which they devote their talents, by the interest which they bring to those pounds which their Master has entrusted to them. Paul, in the commencement of his Epistle, very gently hints at the right use of gifts and talents; and he tells us that they are sent to us, that we may "confirm the testimony of Christ." If we do not use them for this purpose, we misuse them; if we do not turn them to this account, we abuse them. We ought to use our endowments as the Corinthians did *not* use theirs; but as they ought to have done, in confirming the testimony of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Corinthians had more powers than any of us have. Many of them could work miracles; they could heal the sick, they could restore the lepers, they could work wonders by the supernatural gifts of the Holy Ghost. Some of them could talk several languages; and, wherever they went, they were able to speak the language of the people amongst whom they abode. This was because they were not able to spend much time in learning languages, and there needed something special to support the infant church. It was then but a sapling; it required a staff in the ground by its side, that it might lean upon it, and might grow, and be strong. It was a little plant that needed to be sustained; and, therefore, God worked miracles; but now it is the stalwart oak, and has its roots bent round the staunchest rocks in creation; now it needs not any support by miracle, and therefore God has left us without extraordinary gifts. But whatever gifts we have, we are to use them for the purpose mentioned in the text; that is, for the confirmation of the testimony of Christ Jesus.

There are two points which we shall speak of as the Holy Spirit may enable us. First, *The testimony of Christ;* and, secondly, *What is meant by our confirming it?*

I. First, then, THE TESTIMONY OF CHRIST. We are told, in the text, that there was a "testimony of Christ" which was "confirmed in you." Our first enquiry is, What is meant by the testimony of Christ?

That this world is fallen, is the first truth in all theology. "We have gone astray like lost sheep," and had there not been mercy in the mind of God, he might justly have left this world to perish without ever calling it to repentance; but he, in his wondrous long-suffering and his mighty patience, was not pleased so to do. Being full of tender mercies and lovingkindness, he determined on sending the Mediator into the world, whereby he might restore it again to its pristine glory, and might save for himself a people whom "no man could number," who are to be called the elect of God, loved with his everlasting love. In order that he might rescue the world, and save those elect ones, the Lord of hosts has constantly ordained and sent forth a perpetual priesthood of testifiers. What was Abel with his lamb, but the first martyred witness of the truth? Did not Enoch wear his mantle when he walked with God, and prophesied concerning the second advent of Christ? Was not Noah a preacher of righteousness amongst a gainsaying generation? The glorious succession never fails. Abraham comes from Ur of the Chaldees,

and from the hour of his call till the day when he slept in Machpelah, he was a faithful witness. Then we might mention Lot in Sodom, Melchisedec in Salem, Isaac and Jacob in their tents, and Joseph in Egypt. Read the Scripture history, and can you fail to observe a golden chain of united links, hanging over a sea of darkness, but yet uniting Abel with the last of the patriarchs?

We are now arrived at a new era in the history of the Church, but it is not destitute of light. See there the son of Amram, the honoured Moses. That man was a very sun of brightness, for he had been where darkness veiled the unutterable light of the skirts of Jehovah. He climbed the steep sides of Sinai; he went up where the lightnings blazed, and the thunders lifted up their awful voice; he stood upon the mountain's burning summit, and there, in that secret chamber of the Most High, he learned, in forty days, the witness of forty years, and was the constant enunciator of justice and righteousness. But he died, as the best men must. Sleep on in peace, O Moses, in thy secret grave; fear not for truth, for God will be with Joshua as he was with thee!

The times of the judges and kings were sometimes densely darkened; but amid their civil wars, their idolatry, their persecutions, and their visitations, the chosen people still had a remnant according to the election of grace. There were ever some who walked through the earth, like the ancient Druids in the woods, wrapped in white garments of holiness, and crowned with the glories of the Most High. The river of truth might run in a shallow stream, but it was never utterly dry. Next, come to the times of the prophets; and there, after traversing a dreary period, when the world was only illumined here and there by such lamps as Nathan, Abijah, Gad, or Elijah, you find that you have come to the light of meridian day, or rather to a cloudless sky, crowded with stars. There is the eloquent Isaiah, the lamenting Jeremiah, the soaring Ezekiel, the well-beloved Daniel, and, lo, behind these four high priests of prophecy, there follow twelve, clothed in the same habiliments, performing the same service. I might style Isaiah the pole star of prophecy; Jeremiah resembled the rainy Hyades of Horace; Ezekiel was the burning Sirius; and as for Daniel, he resembles a flaming comet, flashing on our vision but for a moment, and then lost in obscurity. I am not at a loss to find a constellation for the minor prophets. They are a sweet group, of intense brilliancy, even though but small,—they are the Pleiades of the Bible. Perhaps, at no former season, were the stars of God marshalled in greater numbers; but yet, amid all preceding and succeeding gloom, the sky of time was never in total darkness; there was always a watcher and a shining one there. God has never abandoned the world, he has never quenched its lamp of testimony, he has never said, "Go, thou vile thing," and spurned it from his foot. He might deluge it once with water; he might rain fire and brimstone upon Sodom; he might drown a nation in the sea; he might destroy a generation in the wilderness; he might devour kingdoms, and root them up; but never, never would he extinguish the perpetual flame of the testimony of truth.

I was thinking, just now, of a picture which I saw, a few days ago, a beautiful painting of a brook, with stepping-stones in the water, upon which the traveller crossed; and the idea has just flashed upon my mind, surely the stream of man's wickedness, and the stream of time, may be crossed by those stepping-stones of testimony. There you have Noah, and he is a stepping-stone, to step on to Abraham; and from him to Moses, and from Moses to Elijah; and so on, from Elijah to Isaiah, from Isaiah to Daniel, and from Daniel down to the brave Maccabees. And what is the last stepping-stone? It is Jesus Christ, the faithful and true Witness, the Prince of the kings of the earth. Jesus was, in one sense, the last Testifier of truth. We are left to confirm it to others; and we shall, just for a few moments, enlarge on what the testimony of Jesus Christ was.

First of all, in order to justify me in calling Jesus Christ a Testifier, I want to refer to one or two passages of Scripture, where you will see that he came into the world to be a Testifier and Witness to the truth. Turn to the 3rd chapter of John, and the 31st verse. John the Baptist says, "He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven is above all. And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth; and no man receiveth his testimony. He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true." There we find John, who was the harbinger of our Saviour, speaking of Christ as giving a testimony, speaking of him as One who came into the world for the special purpose of testifying to the truth. Turn further on in the same Gospel, and you will find, in the 8th chapter and 18th verse, our Saviour says this of himself, "I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me." I refer you, also, to the 18th chapter of John, and the 37th verse, where Pilate saith to Jesus, "Art thou a king then?" and he replies, "For this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth." There, again, you find our Saviour speaking of himself as a Witness. I might refer you to some passages in Isaiah, where he speaks of Christ as a Witness; but I will only keep to the writings of our friend John, so we will now turn to the Book of Revelation. In the first chapter, at the 5th verse, you find him saying, "Jesus Christ, who is the faithful Witness." In the third chapter of the same Book, at the 14th verse, "And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true Witness." Now, then, I think I am not dishonouring my Master by calling him a "Witness." I have placed him side by side with a glorious cloud of witnesses, and I have said he is the last Witness; and I think I have not dishonoured his blessed name when I find he calls himself a "Witness." Let us enlarge upon this head for a moment or two. Christ is the very King of witnesses; he is the greatest of all witnesses, and superior to every other. He does not differ from any other in the things he testifies, for they all testify to the same truth; but there is something in which this glorious Witness is superior to every other.

First, let me remark, that *Christ witnesses directly from himself*, and that is one thing in which he is superior to all the prophets, and the other holy men who testified to the truth. What did Isaiah say? What did Elijah say? or Jeremiah? or Daniel? They only said second-hand things, they spake what God had revealed to them. But when Christ spake, he always spake directly from himself. All the rest only spake that which they had received from God. They had to tarry till the winged seraph brought the live coal; they had to gird on the ephod, and the curious girdle, and the Urim and Thummim; they must stand listening till the voice said, "Son of man, I have a message for thee." They were but instruments blown by the breath of God, and giving forth sounds only at his pleasure; but Christ was a fountain of living water. He opened his mouth, and the truth gushed forth, and it came directly from himself. In this, as a faithful Witness, he was superior to every other. He could say, "What I have seen, and heard, that do I testify. I have been inside the veil; I have entered into the sanctum sanctorum; I have dived into the depths, I have soared into the heights; there is not a place where I have not been, there is not a truth which I cannot call mine own. I am no voice of another." In this respect, he surpassed every other witness.

Secondly, Christ was superior to every other witness from the fact that *his testimony was uniform.* It was always the same testimony; we cannot say *that* of any other witness. Look at Noah; he was a very good testifier to the truth, except once, when he was intoxicated; he was a sorry testifier to the truth then. David was a testifier to the truth, but he sinned against God, and put Uriah to death. What shall we say of Elijah, that man in shaggy garments? He was a testifier to the truth, but he was not so when he fled from Jezebel, and God sent an angel to say to him, "What doest thou here, Elijah?" Abraham was another witness, but he was not so when he said his wife was his sister. The same might be said of Isaac; and if you go through the whole list of holy men, you will find some fault in them; and you will be obliged to say, "They were very good testifiers, certainly, but their testimony is not uniform. There is a plague-spot which sin has left upon them all; there was something to show that man is nothing but an earthen vessel after all." But Christ's testimony was uniform. There never was a time when he contradicted himself; there never was an instance in which it could be said, "What you have said, you now contradict." See him everywhere, whether on the cold mountain-top at midnight in prayer, or in the midst of the city; observe him when he walked through the cornfields on the Sabbath-day, or when on the ocean he bade the waves "Be still;" wherever he was, his testimony was uniform. This cannot be said of any other witness. The best men have their faults. They say that the sun has spots; and so I suppose that the most glorious of men, whoever they are, who will shine most brightly in the firmament for ever and ever, will have their spots while on earth. Christ's testimony was like his own coat, woven from the top throughout; there was not any seam in it at all.

Yet, further, *Christ's testimony was perfect in testifying to all truth.* Other men only gave testimony to parts of truth, but Christ manifested it all. Other men had the threads of truth; but Christ took the threads, and wove them into a glorious robe, put it on, and came forth clothed with every truth of God. There was more of God revealed by Christ than in the works of creation, or in all the prophets. Christ was a Testifier to all God's attributes, and he left none of them unmentioned. Do you ask me whether Christ bore testimony to the justice of God, I tell you, "Yes." See him hanging there, languishing on Calvary, his bones all dislocated. Did he bear testimony to God's mercy? Yes. See those poor creatures who were limping just now,—the lame man is leaping like a hart, the poor blind man is beholding the sun, and rejoicing. Did Jesus witness to the power of God? I say, "Yes." You see him standing in the little ship, and saying to the winds, "Be still!" and holding them in the hollow of his hand. Has he not borne testimony to everything in God? His testimony was perfect; nothing was left out; everything was there.

We could not say that of any mere man. I believe we cannot say that of any modern preacher. Some people say that they can hear Mr. So-and-so, because he preaches so much doctrine, another likes all experience, and some want all practice. Very well, you do not expect that God has made one man to say everything. Certainly not. One class of men defends one class of truths, and another, another. I bless God that there are so many denominations. If there were not men who differed a little in their creeds, we should never get so much gospel as we do. One man loves high doctrine, and he thinks he is bound to defend it every Sabbath; so much the better. Some do not speak of it at all, so that he helps to make up for other people's deficiencies. Some men are fond of fiery exhortations; they give them every Sabbath, and they cannot preach a sermon without them. But, then, others do not give them at all, so that the lack of one is supplied by the superabundance of the other. God has sent different men to defend different kinds of truth; but Christ defended and preached all. He took them, bound them in one bundle, and said, "Here is myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, and all precious spices altogether, here is the whole truth." Christ's testimony was perfect.

Mark, once more, before I come to the confirmation of this testimony, *Christ's testimony was final.* His was the last testimony, the last revelation that ever will be given to man. After Christ, nothing. Christ comes last, he is the last stepping-stone across the brook of time. All who come after him are only confirmers of the testimony of Christ. Our Augustines, our Ambroses, our Chrysostoms, or any other of the mighty preachers of olden times, they never pretended to say anything fresh. They only revived the gospel,—the same old-fashioned gospel which Christ used to preach. And Luther, and Calvin, and Zwingle, and Knox, they only came to confirm the truth. Christ said "*finis*" to the canon of revelation, and it was closed for ever. No one can add a single word thereto, and no one can take a word therefrom. We Dissenters are some-

times charged with inventing a new gospel. We deny it. We say that our Owen, Howe, Henry, Charnock, Bunyan, Baxter, or Janeway, and all that galaxy of stars of the pulpit, did not pretend to say anything new; they only revived the things that Christ said, they only professed to be confirmers of *the* Witness. So has it been with the great men we have lost during the last century. Whitefield and his brother evangelists, and men who stood in the same position as Gill, or Booth, or Rippon, or Carey, or Ryland, or some of those who have just been taken away,—they did not pretend to say anything new. They only said, "Brethren, we come to tell you the same old story; we are not testifiers of new things; we are only confirmers of *the* Witness, Christ Jesus."

II. Now we come to the second part of our subject, and that is, THE TESTIMONY OF CHRIST IS TO BE CONFIRMED IN YOU. There are two points here; first, *the testimony of Christ needs to be confirmed in ourselves*, and, secondly, *it needs to be confirmed in others.*

First, then, to every Christian the testimony of Christ needs to be confirmed in his own heart. O beloved, that is the best confirmation of gospel truth which every Christian carries about within him! I love "Butler's Analogy," it is a very powerful book. I love "Paley's Evidences," but I never need them myself, for my own use; I do not want any proof that the Bible is true. Why? Because it is confirmed in me. There is a witness, which dwells in me, which makes me bid defiance to all infidelity, so that I can say,—

> "Should all the forms that men devise
> Assault my faith with treacherous art,
> I'd call them vanity and lies,
> And bind the gospel to my heart."

I do not care to read books opposing the truths of the Bible, I never want to wade through mire for the sake of washing myself afterwards. When I am asked to read an heretical book, I think of good John Newton. Dr. Taylor, of Norwich, said to him, "Have you read my Key to the Romans?" "I have turned it over," said the Doctor. "And is this the treatment a book must meet with which has cost me so many years' hard study? You ought to have read it carefully, and weighed deliberately what is said on so serious a subject." "Hold," said Newton, "you have cut me out full employment for a life as long as Methuselah's. My life is too short to be spent in reading contradictions of my religion. If the first page tells me the man is undermining the faith, it is enough for me. If I had the first mouthful of a joint tainted, I do not want to eat it through to be convinced I ought to send it away." Having the truth confirmed in us, we can laugh all arguments to scorn; we are placed in a sheet of mail when we have a witness to God's truth within us. All the men in this world cannot make us alter one single iota of what God has written within us. Ah, brethren and sisters, we want to have the truth confirmed within us! Let me tell you a few things that will do this.

First, *the very fact of our conversion tends to confirm us in the*

truth. "Oh!" says the Christian, "do not tell me there is no power in religion, for I have felt it. I was thoughtless like others, I laughed religion to scorn, and those who attended to it; my language was, 'Let us eat and drink, and enjoy the sunshine of life;' but now, through Christ Jesus, I find the Bible a honeycomb, which hardly needs to be pressed to let the drops of honey run out; it is so sweet and precious to my taste that I wish I could sit down and feast on my Bible for ever. What has made this alteration?" That is how the Christian reasons. He says, "There must be a power in grace; otherwise, I never should be so changed as I am; there must be truth in the Christian religion; otherwise, this change would never have come over me." Some men have ridiculed religion and its followers, and yet divine grace has been so mighty, that those very men have become converted, and experienced the new birth. Such men cannot be argued out of the truth of religion. You may stand and talk to them from dewy morn to the setting of the sun, but you can never get them to believe that there is no truth in God's Word, for they have the truth confirmed in them.

Then, again, another thing confirms the Christian in the truth, and that is, *when God answers his prayers.* I think that it is one of the strongest confirmations of truth when we find that God hears us. Now I speak to you, on this point, of things which I have tasted and handled. The wicked man will not believe this; he will say, "Ah, go and tell those who know no better!" But I say that I have proved the power of prayer a hundred times, because I have gone to God, and asked him for mercies, and have received them. "Ah!" say some, "it is only just in the common course of providence." "*Common course of providence!*" It is a blessed course of providence; if you had been in my position, you would not have said that; I have seen it just as clearly as if God had rent the heavens, and put his hand out, and said, "There, my child, is the mercy you asked." It has come so plainly out of the way, that I could not call it a common course of providence. Sometimes, I have been depressed and downcast, and even out of heart at coming to stand before this multitude, and I have said, "What shall I do?" I could fly anywhere rather than come here any more. I have asked God to bless me, and send me words to say, and then I have felt filled to the brim, so that I could come before this congregation or any other. Is that a common course of providence? It is a special providence,—a special answer to prayer. And there are others here, who can turn to the pages of their diary, and see there God's hand plainly interposing; so we can say to the infidel, "Begone! The truth of God is confirmed in us, and so confirmed that nothing can drive us out of it."

You have had the truth confirmed in you, my dear friends, *when you have found great support in times of affliction and tribulation.* Some of you have passed through deep trouble, some of you have been sorely tried, and have been brought very low; but can you not say with David, "I was brought low, and the Lord helped me"? Can you not recall how well you bore that last trouble? When you lost that dear child, you thought you could not bear it so well

as you did; but you said, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord." Many of you have loved ones under the sod; your mother, father, husband, or wife. You thought your heart would break when you lost your parents; but when your father and your mother were taken from you, then the Lord took you up. He told thee, poor widow, that he would be a father to thy children, and hast thou not found it so? Canst thou not say, "Not one good thing has failed of all that the Lord has promised"? That is the best confirmation of the truth of God. Sometimes, persons come to me, in my vestry, and they want me to confirm the truth outside of them. I cannot do that, I want them to have the truth confirmed in them. They say, "How do you know that the Bible is true?" "Oh!" I reply, "I never have to ask such a question as that now, because it is confirmed in me. The Bishop has confirmed me." I mean, "the Bishop of souls," the Lord Jesus Christ, for I never was confirmed by any other, and he has so confirmed me in the truth that no one can take it out of me. I say to these people, "Try religion yourself, and you will see its power. You stop outside the house, and you want me to prove what is inside the house; go in yourself,—'taste and see that the Lord is good,' blessed are all they that trust in him." This is the best way of confirming the truth to ourselves.

The second thought was, that it was our business, not only to have the truth confirmed in our own souls, but *so to live that we might be the means of confirming the truth in others.* Do you know what Bible the worldly man reads? He does not read this Bible at all; he reads the Christian. "There," says he, "that man goes to church, or chapel, and he is a member, I will see how he lives, I will read him up and down;" and he watches him, and reads his conduct. If he is bad, he says, "Religion is a farce;" but if he is a man who lives up to it, he says, "There is something in religion after all." Wicked men read professors; they watch them to see whether they live up to their profession. Christians have Argus, with a hundred eyes, staring at them. Worldlings look at every fault with a magnifying glass, and they make the smallest molehill into a great mountain; and if there is a mote in our eye, they will make it a beam, and they will say the man is a hypocrite at once. It is the duty of every child of God so to live that he may confirm the witness of Christ. We should labour to do it in all the common things of daily life. "Whether ye eat, or drink, or whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God." Some men think that religion lies only in great things. It does not, for it lies also in little things. Take any one day of our lives; we eat, drink, rise in the morning, go to bed at night, there is nothing very particular about the day. Our life is made up of little things; and if we are not careful of little things, we shall not be careful of great ones. If we do not mind the little things, the great ones must go wrong. Oh, may you have grace so to live that the world may find no fault in you; and if in little things they see exactness and precision, (and too much precision will be better than the looseness of the morals of some professors,) then they will say, "There is something in

religion; that man's life has confirmed it in my mind, because he lives up to it."

Then, again, *if you can bear the taunts of wicked men without returning them*, that will be a good way of confirming religion. When I have entered into controversy with some men, and have been betrayed into heat of temper, I could have bitten my fingers off that I should have done so. If you can keep your temper when men laugh at you, and if, when they revile you, you do not return it, you will confirm the truth. They will say, "There is something in that man's religion, otherwise he could not so keep his temper." You have read of James Haldane. Once, when unconverted, he threw a ship's tumbler at the head of a person who had insulted him; but when he was regenerated, on another occasion of insult, he simply said, "I would resent it, but I have learned to forgive injuries and overlook insults." Men were obliged to say of him, "There is something in the religion which can bring such a lion as that down, and make him such a lamb." Thus you will confirm the witness of Christ, if you quietly endure persecution. If you can bear the laugh and jeer of wicked men patiently, you will confirm the truth.

The last confirmation you and I, my friends, will ever be able to give to the witness of Christ is coming very soon. There is an hour when we shall no longer be able to confirm the truth by living for it; for we must die, and *that is the best confirmation of a man's principles,—when he dies well.* One of the noblest confirmations of the Christian religion is the fact that a man dies a peaceable, a happy, and even a triumphant death. Oh, if, when you come to die, you are able to say, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" and if you can grasp the tyrant Death in your hand, and hurl him to the ground, and triumph in him who said, "O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction!" if you can die without fear, or repining, or remorse, knowing that you are forgiven,—if you can die with the song of victory on your lip, and with the smile of joy upon your countenance, then you will confirm the witness of Christ.

In conclusion, let me urge you, as followers of Christ Jesus, as those whom he has loved with an everlasting love, as heirs of immortality, as those who have been rescued from the pit of destruction, as professors of religion, as members of a Christian church, let me beseech you to make it your first and last object to confirm the witness of Christ. Wherever you are, whatever you are doing, say within yourself, "I must so live and die that I may confirm the witness of Christ. I must so walk amongst my friends and neighbours that they will see that there is a truth and a power in religion." And let me warn you not to undertake this task in your own strength; you will need power from on high, from the Holy Ghost, a fresh supply of grace from the throne of the heavenly grace. It is a good plan that some persons adopt; they walk home, after service, and when they get there, they have a few minutes in prayer with their God. It is a blessed way of clinching the nail, and making a sermon tell. So, dear friend, go home, and say, "I

solemnly vow, yet not in my own strength; but I solemnly vow, by thy grace, that, from this moment, henceforward, it shall be my aim to live more as a confirmer of the truth! I did not know my high calling before, but I know now that I am a confirmer of the truth. Lord, help me so to live that there may never be any flaw in my conduct, never any vile word proceed out of my lips, make me so to live that I may confirm thy truth! Lord, help me to confirm the witness of Christ!" Go and register that vow, and that resolution, and seek God's grace that you may not let it be a vow uncarried out; but may you be able to live to the glory of God, and to the honour of his blessed name! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

PSALM LXXXIV.

A Psalm for the sons of Korah.

You remember how Korah, Dathan, and Abiram were destroyed because of their rebellion against the Lord, and their revolt against his chosen servants, Moses and Aaron; and you, no doubt, recollect how it is recorded that "the children of Korah died not." Why they were spared, we cannot tell, except that it was an act of sovereign grace; and if so, I can understand why they were afterwards selected to be among the chief singers in the house of the Lord, for who can sing so sweetly to the God of grace as the men who have been saved by his sovereign, distinguishing grace?

So this Psalm is "for (or, of) the sons of Korah."

> "Who can praise the blessèd God,
> Like a sinner saved by grace?
> Angels cannot sing so loud,
> Though they see him face to face;
> Sinless angels ne'er can know
> What a debt saved sinners owe."

Verse 1. *How amiable are thy tabernacles, O* LORD *of hosts!*

The outer portions and the inner parts as well,—how lovely they all are! To be among thy people, to have sweet fellowship with them, how delightful it is, "O Lord of hosts!" Thou dwellest in thy tabernacles, O Jehovah of hosts, like a king in the centre of his army, and thy people encamp round about thee!

2. *My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the* LORD:

Those children of God, who have been for even a little while exiled from the courts of the Lord, prize them all the more when they get back to them.

2. *My heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.*

There gets to be so deep a longing to appear once more in the house of the Lord that even this clay-cold flesh of ours, which with difficulty becomes warm towards good things, at last melts, and joins in the common cry of the believer's whole being: "My heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God."

3. *Yea, the sparrow hath found an house,—*

She is such a bold bird that she comes and picks up a crumb or two even in the courts of God's house; so, Lord, let me be one of thy sparrows to-day: "Yea, the sparrow hath found an house,"—

3. *And the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O LORD of hosts, my King, and my God.*

God's house is dear to us for the benefit that it is to ourselves, but it is still dearer to us for our children's sake, as a nest where we may lay our young. What a double mercy it is when young people love to come with their parents to the house of God!

4. *Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee. Selah.*

The psalmist felt that those who were always in the house of the Lord must always be full of music. I am afraid that it is not so in all cases, yet it should be so.

5. *Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee; in whose heart are the ways of them.*

The man, who throws his whole heart and soul into his worship of the Lord, and his service for the Lord, is the man who gets the greatest blessing out of the holy exercises in which he takes part. Half-hearted worshippers are an insult to God, but blessed is the man whose strength is in the Lord of hosts, and whose heart is in his ways.

6. *Who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well; the rain also filleth the pools.*

If they pass through valleys that are dreary and gloomy, they find them to be a benefit and a blessing, for they get refreshments on the road, and help to cheer other travellers also.

7, 8. *They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God. O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer: give ear, O God of Jacob. Selah.*

David cannot go up with the multitude that keeps holy day; so, feeling like Jacob when he was all alone at the brook Jabbok, like him he wrestles with God for a blessing. You can hear him crying out in the wilderness: "O Jehovah God of hosts, hear my prayer: give ear, O God of Jacob;" and he, who heard the prayer of lonely Jacob by the brook-side, hears the cry of David, and the cries of all his children who cannot join the great assembly of worshippers of God.

9. *Behold, O God our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed.*

Jesus is the "shield" of his people, and he is "anointed" for his people; and there is, in Jesus, so much of all that is good that, when the Father looks upon us in him, he can see goodness even in us poor sinners, for the goodness of Christ overflows to us, and is accounted ours.

10. *For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand.*

Of course, the psalmist means that a day in God's courts is better than a thousand spent anywhere else. See how he contrasts nearly three years with a single day, and he might have gone even further, and said, "Better be one day with God than a thousand years without him." He gives us another contrast as he goes on to say:—

10—12. *I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness. For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory; no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly. O LORD of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee.*

May all of us know that blessedness, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

CHRIST'S CROWNING GLORY.

A Sermon

PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MARCH 24TH, 1904,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, March 5th, 1876.

"His glory is great in thy salvation: honour and majesty hast thou laid upon him."—Psalm xxi. 5.

I FEEL quite sure that David here sings first concerning himself, and then concerning the far greater King, "great David's greater Son," the Lord Jesus Christ; but I shall apply the text entirely to our blessed Redeemer; and, surely, the psalmist's language is most appropriate to him.

Some of us are going to meet, presently, around the table of our Lord, to commemorate his death for us; and, of course, there must be some sorrowful reflections connected with that ordinance. How can we remember his death without sorrowing over the sin which made that death necessary? How can we remember "that the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread, and brake it," without feeling that there is a sombreness of spirit which becomes us as we surround his table? Yet we must not indulge the mournful strain too much, for we must never forget that it is a joyous feast, not a funeral repast, to which our Lord invites us; it is a feast which reminds us of his triumph as well as of his conflict and agony. "After supper," we are told, in the record of its institution, "they sang a hymn;" and our Lord Jesus Christ would have us come to his table in the spirit of hymn-singing, making melody in our hearts unto the Lord. No funeral dirge is appropriate here, no muffled drums nor wailing pipes; but let the daughters of song sound the loud timbrel, as Miriam and the women of Israel did at the Red Sea.

Let it not be forgotten, too, that the last time this supper will ever be celebrated on earth, it will not die out amid groans and lamentations, but it will cease to be observed any longer because he will have come, whose coming will have been welcomed by the acclamation of all his saints, both those that are alive and remain,

and those who come with the King and all his holy angels. This ordinance is full of joy, for each time it closes with a hymn when it is properly celebrated; and, at the last, like all external symbols, it shall pass away amidst the hallelujahs of eternity. Come, then, beloved, let us not be in a dolorous mood as we come to the table of our Lord; but let us take all our harps down from the willows, and wake their glad strings to exultant music. He, whom we remember in this ordinance, is not here, for he is risen. He is not there, on yonder crucifix. His wounds bleed no longer; no thorns surround his brow, no nails pierce his feet and hands, no spear tears open his side, for he has gone back into the glory which was his ere the worlds were made, and it is thus that we are now to think of him: "His glory is great in thy salvation: honour and majesty hast thou laid upon him."

In meditating upon this text, we shall notice, first, that *it reminds us of a divine salvation;* secondly, *it sets forth the glory of Jesus in that salvation;* and, thirdly, *it reveals to us the reward which Jesus has obtained for that salvation:* "Honour and majesty hast thou laid upon him."

I. First, then, THE TEXT REMINDS US OF A DIVINE SALVATION. It speaks of "*thy* salvation", that is to say, the salvation of God, by which is intended, according to the Hebrew idiom, not merely the grandest of all salvations, the chief of all deliverances; but, actually, that the salvation of which we speak is God's. O brethren, though the truth be very simple, and the observations I shall make upon it may be very trite, yet is it a truth never to be put in the background that "salvation is of the Lord"!

Remember that *the salvation of man is God's, in the conception of it.* He first conceived the idea of redeeming the rebellious sons of Adam. It must be so, for the sons of Adam were not born when first the Lord planned the way of their salvation. From old eternity, ere yet the sun had opened his eye of fire, God in far-reaching foresight had beheld the sons of Adam ruined by the fall; and he resolved that, out of them, he would choose a people who should be redeemed, and who, to all eternity, should show forth his praise. From the august mind of the infinite God, the first thought of salvation sprang; and it was he who sketched and mapped it all out, electing unto eternal life as many as it pleased him, settling the way by which they should be redeemed, the method by which they should be called, arranging the place, the day, the hour, the means, by which they should be converted, fixing it all, according to his eternal purpose, in infinite wisdom and prudence, for in every part it was to be of him, and through him, and to him. Even as in the old tabernacle in the wilderness, every board, and curtain, and hook, and silver socket, every badger skin, and every vessel of the sanctuary, was ordained by God, and man was only left to carry out God's plan, even so is it in the salvation of God. In its minutest details, as well as in its grand outline, the provisions of eternal love are of the Lord, so it is his salvation.

But you know, dear brethren, that it was not only his in the arranging, but *it was also carried out by God.* Who is he that hath

redeemed us by his blood, but he who is over all God, blessed for ever? Who trod the wine-press side by side with him? Did he not stand there alone, and, single-handed, win the victory? And whence comes every blessing of salvation? Who provided it? Has man any share in the provision of any of the mercies by which sinners are taken out of sin into righteousness, and raised from the ruins of the fall to all the glories of heaven? No, from first to last, all the provisions of eternal love are of the Lord, so it is his salvation.

Nay, more than that, God has not only planned and provided everything relating to it, but *it is he who applies the salvation which he has thus provided.* No one believes that Jesus is the Christ but by the teaching of the Holy Ghost. "No man cometh unto the Father but by me," says Christ. Much is said by some people about free will, but free will has never done anything in this world yet—unless moved by free grace,—except to ruin mankind. Leave men to themselves, and they are sure to choose that which is evil. As naturally as the river runs downwards to the sea, so does the heart of man turn towards that which is unclean. If the heart ever ascends towards holiness, and Christ, and God, it is because it is drawn upward by grace, and the Lord is working in us to will and to do of his own good pleasure. From the first sigh of repentance to the last hymn of thanksgiving, everything in us that is good is his workmanship; and so, in that respect, our salvation is of the Lord. And, beloved, when it is all finished,—when every one, who ever shall be called, has been called,—when every one of the Lord's elect has been regenerated, justified, sanctified, and glorified,—when the whole of the blood-washed family of God shall surround his throne above, all the glory shall be given unto the Lord alone. There will be no jarring note in heaven, no whisper of human merit, no claim of a reward for good intentions; but every crown shall be cast at Jesu's feet, and every voice shall join in the ascription, "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name be all the glory of the salvation which thou hast wrought out for us from first to last."

Let me pause, just a minute, to put this question to each one here,—Do you, dear friend, know anything about this salvation which is all of God? I fear that there are many who have no more religion than they have made themselves. Their religion is the result of their own efforts to improve themselves. Ah, sirs! our Saviour's words are still true, "Ye must be born again;" and, as it was in our first birth, so must it be in our second birth,—not our own act. Depend upon it, if all the good you have has been fetched out of yourself as the spider draws its web out of its own bowels, it will all have to be brushed away. All that nature spins will have to be unravelled, and all that nature builds will have to be pulled down. God must save you, or you will be lost for ever. The Holy Spirit, the third Person of the blessed Trinity in Unity, must come upon you, and quicken you into newness of life, and renew you in the spirit of your mind, or else you will fall short of that which is requisite for admission into the kingdom of God. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." The best flesh is only

flesh; and only "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." Consequently, the Spirit of God must operate upon us, or else we shall remain unspiritual, not able to understand spiritual things, and not possessing that spiritual life without which we cannot enter, at the last, into the enjoyment of those spiritual pleasures which are at God's right hand for evermore. One thing I can say without any doubt. I, personally, know that it is God's salvation that has saved me; and I think I speak the mind of many here when I say that they feel that, if the Holy Spirit does not work in them from the first to the last, their salvation will never be accomplished. I do not know any doctrine which my experience more fully confirms than that to which Jonah gave utterance when he was in the whale's belly, "Salvation is of the Lord." It is, as our text reminds us, a divine salvation.

II. Now, secondly, I come to the subject which I desire to impress most deeply upon your memory, that is, THE GLORY OF CHRIST IN THE SALVATION OF GOD: "His glory is great in thy salvation."

Ah, brethren! the tongues of men and angels can never fully tell the glory of Christ in salvation. It is a subject to be thought over by the loftiest intellects; a theme for men, who lie awake at nights, to meditate upon; a topic worthy of the thoughts of those who linger on the verge of heaven. Dr. John Owen's pen was somewhat heavy in its style, but it never glowed and burned so much as when he wrote upon the glory of Christ. This is a theme which the glorified spirits before the throne perpetually contemplate; and the more fit we are to be among them, the more delightful will this subject be to us. As to that glory, oh, if I had the allotting and the measuring of it, what glory I would give to my dear Lord and Master! I read, the other day,—I cannot exactly quote the words, though I give the sense,—a sentence by Samuel Rutherford, in which he said that he would like to pile up ten thousand million heavens upon the top of the third heaven to which Paul was caught up, and put Christ in that high place; and then he would not be as high as he deserved to be put; and, truly, no honours seem sufficient for him who stripped himself of all he had that he might become the Saviour of sinners.

And, first, it is his glory that *he has redeemed his people from stupendous evils.* When a statesman or a warrior rescues a country from a cruel despotism, and brings to it the blessings of liberty, he deserves great praise. But, my brethren, the tyranny of sin, from which Christ has delivered his people, was a thousand times worse than the rule of the worst human despot. Consider, for a moment, the position in which his people were in the sight of God. They had sinned, and they had therefore become exposed to the wrath of God. Unless some power, greater than their own, should intervene, they must be cast into hell for ever. God himself could not lay aside his justice, for God would cease to be if he ceased to be just, and an unjust God is a contradiction in terms,—an impossible combination. How, then, were these, who had sinned against God, to be delivered from the peril which hung over them? Moreover, they were held in bondage by sin, so that, even if the punishment

of their past sin could be removed, they were still members of an enslaved race. Satan had cast his iron chains about them, and they were led captive by him at his will.

Ah, sirs! it is from this bondage that Christ has set us free, for he has taken away our guilt, bearing it in his own body up to the tree; and then hurling it away from the tree into his grave, to be remembered against us no more for ever. By bearing the punishment that was due to us, Christ has delivered us from the yoke of Satan and of sin; and, by the wondrous redemption which he has wrought out, and brought in, he has made his people "free indeed." No curse now hangs above their head; no sin now hath dominion over them, for they are not under the law, but under grace. Therefore, sound aloud your Deliverer's praises, all ye who have been thus delivered! Think of what stupendous evils these were from which Christ set us free. To overthrow an oppressive empire, is a great achievement. To rout the vast hordes that are led into the battlefield by great tyrants, is no slight victory. The conqueror's statue is set up on high, and his name is emblazoned upon the scroll of earthly fame; then, what honour shall be given to Christ, who hath set us free from mightier foes than ever trampled upon a nation's liberties?

Recollect, too, that he has not only delivered us from stupendous evils; but, *in the process, he has crushed the mightiest powers.* It did seem, at one time, as if evil would get the mastery in God's universe. God had permitted the strange experiment, as it seemed, of making creatures, gifted with free agency, with whose free agency he would not interfere. These creatures broke his law. How was the evil to be prevented from spreading? They would multiply and increase; as, indeed, they have done; and, multiplying and increasing, there would be so many millions of spirits in the universe, all rebellious against God; and, consequently, all suffering. There would be countless myriads, born into God's world, all bearing hearts of sin within their bosoms, and all, therefore, subject to the wrath of God. How Satan exulted at the prospect of evil increasing! But when Jesus came into this world, he put his foot upon the head of the old dragon, and so effectually crushed him to the earth that he has never been able to rise again. Satan saw Christ hanging upon the cross, and thought that was his opportunity for gaining a decisive victory, yet it proved to be the hour of his greatest defeat. Death drove his sting right through the heart of Christ, but it so fixed itself in his cross that it could never be drawn out again; and, now, that sting of death, which is sin, is gone so far as all believers in Christ are concerned. He has vanquished all the powers of evil,—sin, death, and hell,—and shattered their forces for ever. Hark to this great shout of victory; oh, that I had a voice loud enough to make it ring round the globe: "Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them."

Perhaps the main point of Christ's glory in the salvation of his people is that *he has achieved this by means which reflect unbounded*

honour upon his holy name. I have often read the story of Cromwell's Ironsides; and, sympathizing deeply with them in the object of their fight, I have greatly admired their stern courage and consecrated ardour; but, still, I cannot think of battles and of fighting for the best of objects without something of a shudder; so I cannot approve of the means which they employed. Doubtless, our country owes her present liberties to those brave men; yet, for all that, I grieve over the awful price of blood at which those liberties were purchased. Our blessed Lord and Master conquered all our foes, but what were the weapons he used to secure so glorious a victory? Do you look up to him, and enquire, "Where is thy battle-axe, O Lord Jesus? Where are thy spear, thy sword, thy quiver, and thine arrows?" He bids you look at his hands, his feet, his side, his heart. These are the weapons with which he overcame all the powers of darkness. There was much suffering in that awful conflict, but the suffering was all his own. There was a terrible gory sweat, but it came from his own body. There were wounds, and there was death, but the wounds were in his precious body, the death was all his own. This is how evil was conquered,—by love which denied itself, even to the death, for the sake of others. This is how human stubbornness was vanquished,—by an almighty patience that could suffer at the hands of rebellious sinners till it bled to death. This is thy death, O death;—this is thy hell, O hell;—this is thy destruction, O destruction;—that God himself bore the consequences of his creatures' sin! Nay, start not back at that expression, I pray you; do not think of Christ as being separated from God. God did not find somebody else to be the Substitute for sinners, but he gave his only-begotten and well-beloved Son, Jesus Christ, who is the equal and in all respects one with the Father. It was God himself, in the person of the man Christ Jesus, who bore the penalty that was due to human sin; it was God, in the person of his Son, suffering, agonizing, groaning, dying, to put our sin away for ever. I cannot conceive, nor do I think that cherubim and seraphim could conceive of anything more noble and more glorious than this self-sacrifice of the Son of God. He conquers, not by making others suffer, but by sufferings all his own.

A kindred thought to that is this. Christ's glory is great in the divine salvation, because *it developed and revealed the most wonderful attributes.* Suppose England were to win a great victory at sea. We should probably ascribe it to her superior men-of-war. Generally, battles are decided, as Napoleon said, by the big battalions, or by the excellence of the weapons that are used by the soldiers. If one man has an old Brown Bess, and another a modern rifle, we can pretty well guess on which side the victory will be. We call it "glory" when one fellow, who is twice as big as another, knocks the little one down; at least, we call it "glory" when the nation, which has the better ships, and the bigger army, wins the victory. I saw a huge Newfoundland dog pick up a poodle, and shake him, there was about as much "glory" in that as when great nations war against little ones, and overpower them. It is the same

kind of "glory" as being a bigger bully, and having a harder fist and a stronger muscle than anybody else. That may be the sort of glory for a bull, or a lion, or an ass; but it is not the glory that is suited to men, and especially to Christian men. But when Christ came, and redeemed us, there was, on his part, no display of physical power, mere brute power. There was a display of power, but it was the power of goodness, the power to suffer, the power to be patient, the power to love; as if God said to men, "Sinners and rebels as you are, I love you more than you hate me; and great as your badness is, my goodness shall overwhelm your badness, my pardoning mercy shall overpower your power to transgress."

As the result of his death upon the cross, our Lord Jesus has saved a multitude whom no man can number; and a part of his glory consists in *the fact that there are so many whom he has saved.* The salvation of God is not for just a little privileged company. I know that certain "sound" brethren imagine that the blessings of salvation are confined to just a few favoured individuals in Little Zoar, or Rehoboth; they delight in the idea that there are only a few that will be saved. I trust that we have no sympathy with such narrow views; for my own part, I rejoice to know that, in heaven, there will be "a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues," who shall cry, "Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb." So our Lord Jesus Christ has great glory from the fact that he saves so many sinners.

There is this peculiarity about all whom he saves, that *they are attached to him for ever.* His glory is great in their salvation because every one of them is, from that day forth, Christ's man, Christ's woman, for ever and for evermore. In travelling through France, lately, I have been greatly amused at seeing, in various public squares, pedestals that were evidently intended for equestrian statues, but there are no statues upon them; and there are escutcheons upon town halls, which look as if there should have been medallions upon them, but there are no portraits where the medallions should have been. On making enquiries, you will find that a statue of Napoleon the Third used to stand on that pedestal, and a medallion of him used to be on that town hall. That must be a fine country for stone-masons, because they so frequently have fresh governments, and need also to have fresh statues. I have heard of a man, living in Paris, who used to ask, every morning, whether he was under a republic, or a monarchy, or an empire; and when he was told which it was, he was not at all sure that it would last till the evening. No matter how good the ruler has been, nor how many times they have painted his likeness, or set up his image, the moment he has ill fortune, away go all the representations of him.

You would have thought that many rulers would have obtained a permanent place in the hearts of their people; yet we know, from the history of various countries, that very few have done so. Those who are idolized to-day are despised to-morrow. But our Lord Jesus has a glory which is great in our salvation, because his image

is for ever enshrined in our hearts. The great Napoleon hit the nail on the head when, at St. Helena, musing upon his own position, he said to one who walked with him, "Jesus Christ is the most wonderful of men. I founded an empire, which has passed away; but his never will, and I see the reason for that. Mine was founded upon force, but Christ's is founded upon love." Ah, that is the reason for our devotion to him! He has loved us so much that he has won us to himself for ever. These hands of mine are manacled with blessed, invisible, but unbreakable bands of love; never was I truly free until I felt those fetters binding me to my Lord. This heart of mine is fast riveted to Christ. It never was really my own till it became his; but now it is his for ever and ever. "I bear in my body," said Paul, "the marks of the Lord Jesus." He felt it to be an unspeakable honour to be the branded slave of Jesus Christ, with the cross burnt into his very flesh by the suffering which he had endured for the sake of his dear Lord and Master. Truly, brethren, to rule over other men is a great thing; to have moral power over men, is no mean matter; but to get men so to love you that they would willingly die for you,—to get them so to love you that they would sooner cease to live than cease to love you,—this is to occupy a glorious high throne; and such is the throne upon which Christ sits in the hearts of all his people, such is the dominion which he wields over all the hosts that he has purchased with his precious blood. Well saith the prophet in our text,—for the psalmist was a true prophet,—"His glory is great in thy salvation."

III. Now, thirdly, our text REVEALS THE REWARD WHICH JESUS HAS OBTAINED FOR THIS GREAT SALVATION: "Honour and majesty hast thou laid upon him." I do not intend to preach upon this last point, but only to give you just a few sentences by way of an outline of the honour and majesty which God the Father has laid upon Christ.

First, *our Lord Jesus Christ has been exalted, as man, to reign over the angels.* As God, he was ever Ruler, Governor, and Lord of all; but the man Christ Jesus died, was buried, and rose again, and then ascended into the glory; and now he is Head over all principalities and powers, and all the holy angels, that have never fallen, delight to do his bidding. My brother, in that very sweet prayer before the sermon, to which I assented with all my heart, pleaded that we might get a view of Jesus Christ within the veil in his glory. That is how I want you to think of him,—that very man, who hung upon the tree; that very man, who was the butt of all the reproaches and scorn of his enemies, now sits upon the throne of God, and around him all the cherubim and seraphim are gathered, all worshipping and adoring him, and praising and magnifying his holy name.

Then, my brethren, *God has given to the Lord Jesus to be the Head of his Church.* Over all the redeemed, on earth and in heaven, Christ presides and rules. While he is the Lord of the angels, he is also the Lord of all elect men. His Father gave them to him from eternity, and made him to be the Head and made them to be the members of his mystical body. Christ is the one and only Head and

supreme Ruler of his Church. It is true that there are men who set themselves up as governors of Christ's Church; and there is an anti-christ, at Rome, who calls himself the head of the church; but that is only a wicked fiction, a manifest lie. There is but one Head of the Church, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the only supreme Ruler, and before him all his loyal subjects bow. "Honour and majesty hast thou laid upon him."

Being Head of his Church, *He is also Head over all things, outside of his Church, in which his Church is concerned.* Joseph ruled Egypt for the good of Israel; and in like manner does Christ rule the whole world for the good of his people. All the arrangements of providence are under his control; nothing is done in the entire universe without his command or his permission. Does that statement startle you? It is, nevertheless, true. He, who was made Lord of the angels, hath had all things put under his feet, and he is, at this moment, Lord of all; and, brethren, we shall see this demonstrated soon, for he is coming. As surely as he went up to heaven, literally and personally, so surely will he come again, literally and personally; and when he does come, it will be as Ruler and Lord over all, for he will come to judge the quick and the dead according to his gospel. Then will all created intelligences behold the honour and majesty which God has put upon him. There will have to appear, before the judgment seat of the Nazarene, the spirits that fell ages upon ages ago. Satan shall come, and receive his final sentence, and be banished for ever to hell. Then shall come the unbelieving world, to hear from Christ's lips the terrible message, "Depart, ye cursed!" The earth shall reel beneath his presence,—that earth which could scarcely lend him a sepulchre; and heaven and earth shall flee away from that face which earth once seemed to scorn and heaven to forget. Ah, it will be seen who the Christ is in that day! A trumpet blast, more terrible than that which startled the echoes of Sinai, shall ring over land and sea. A cloud shall come, and on it shall stand the great white throne, and upon it shall be seated the "man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." But, oh, how changed!

"With rainbow wreath and robes of storm,"—

he shall come;—with a face shining above the brightness of the sun, and with eyes like flames of fire, he shall come in all the glory of his Father, with all his holy angels to attend him, and to swell the triumph of his appearing. O brothers and sisters, let us anticipate that glorious appearing, and begin to clap our hands with exultation over our Lord's triumphal advent!

But are we all his people? Do not desire that day if you are not his, for the day of the Lord will be darkness, and not light, to all who are his enemies. The more glorious Christ is to his own people, the more dreadful will his appearance be to you if you live as unbelievers, and if you die without trusting in him. O Christians, I bid you be glad in your Lord, and I also bid you pray for the unsaved, that they may trust, and love, and serve Jesus, too, and rejoice with you in recollecting that he is coming again to receive unto himself all to whom he is both Lord and Saviour! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

LUKE VII. 18—50.

Verse 18. *And the disciples of John shewed him of all these things.*

John was in prison, and, possibly, troubled in spirit.

19. *And John calling unto him two of his disciples sent them to Jesus, saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another?*

Did John doubt, then? Perhaps not. It may be that he saw that his disciples doubted, and that he wished their fears to be removed. It is possible, however, that he did himself have doubts. It is no unusual thing for the bravest hearts to be subject to fits of doubt. Elijah, you remember, sat under a juniper tree in the wilderness, "and he requested for himself that he might die," though he was the man who never was to die. And John,—the Elijah of the Christian dispensation, though a man of iron, was but a man, so he sent two of his disciples to Jesus, saying, "Art thou he that should come, or look we for another?"

20—22. *When the men were come unto him, they said, John Baptist hath sent us unto thee, saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another? And in that same hour he cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits; and unto many that were blind he gave sight. Then Jesus answering said unto them, Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard;*

Our old proverb says that actions speak louder than words; so an answer in his actions would be more eloquent with these enquirers than even an answer in our Lord's own words. He bade them look at the evidences of his Messiahship which he gave them by his miraculous cures, and then he said to them, "Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard." It would be well if our lives were such that, if any enquired what we were, we should only have to say that they might judge us by what they had seen and heard in our common every-day life and conversation.

22, 23. *How that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached. And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.*

According to our Lord's testimony, the preaching of the gospel to the poor is as great a proof of his Messiahship as the raising of the dead. Then, how highly it ought to be prized by them, and how glad should they be who have the gospel now preached freely in their hearing!

24. *And when the messengers of John were departed, he began to speak unto the people concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness for to see? A reed shaken with the wind?*

The wind on the banks of the Jordan, where there are plenty of reeds growing;—did you see a man who would bow before every breath of popular favour or popular wrath? Was John the Baptist such a man as that? No, certainly not.

25. *But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? Behold, they which are gorgeously apparelled, and live delicately, are in kings' courts.*

They do not preach repentance. As is their clothing, so is their doctrine, They try to show a royal road to heaven,—a smooth and easy path. But was John the Baptist a preacher of that kind? No, that he was not.

26—28. *But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and much more than a prophet. This is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater*

prophet than John the Baptist: but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.

Passing into the dispensation of clearer light, he who is least among the believers of the gospel of Jesus is, in some respects, greater than this man, who could only preach repentance, and point to a coming Saviour.

29—32. *And all the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him. And the Lord said, Whereunto then shall I liken the men of this generation? and to what are they like? They are like unto children sitting in the marketplace,*

At play; the playing of children is often according to the manners and customs of grown up people.

32. *And calling one to another, and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced;*

"You would not play a merry game when we asked you to do so."

32. *We have mourned to you, and ye have not wept.*

"You would not play either at funerals or weddings."

33. *For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine; and ye say, He hath a devil.*

"He came among you as an ascetic, denying himself, not only the luxuries of life, but even the common comforts that others enjoyed, and ye say, 'He hath a devil.'"

34. *The Son of man is come eating and drinking;*

"He does not pretend to be an ascetic; he comes, on the contrary, to show that neither meat nor drink can save a man. What do you say, then, of this Son of man?"

34, 35. *And ye say, Behold a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners! But wisdom is justified of all her children.*

Though the world contemns all wisdom's children, whichever way they go, and is not pleased with their manners, whatever manners they possess, yet, in the long run, when the wisdom of God shall be all unfolded, it will be seen that the roughness of John and the gentleness and lovingkindness of Jesus were both right in their proper place. If fish are not caught in the gospel fishery, it may sometimes be the fisherman's fault; but more often, it is the fault of the fish themselves. Here we have two very different kinds of fishermen, yet neither of them attracts all, though each of them draws some.

36, 37. *And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat. And, behold,—*

For it is a wonder of grace: "Behold,"—

37. *A woman in the city, which was a sinner,—*

A sinner by profession, a public and notorious sinner,—

37—44. *When she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment. Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner. And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on. There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them*

will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged. And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet:

"Though it was only a common act of courtesy, such as should always be shown to a guest, thou didst neglect that;"—

44. *But she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head.*

"She has given my feet no common washing, for she has washed them with her tears. You would only have brought me a linen napkin, but she hath 'wiped them with the hairs of her head'"

45. *Thou gavest me no kiss:*

Which was usually given as a greeting to guests at that time. Simon had not given to Jesus the honour which was due to him, which would have been to kiss his forehead.

45. *But this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet.*

Every word is emphatic to show how far she had gone beyond Simon, who thought himself so much better than she was.

46. *My head with oil thou didst not anoint:*

Another usual Eastern custom with guests whom the host intended to honour.

46. *But this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment.*

Anointed them, not with ordinary olive oil, but with precious costly ointment.

47. *Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much:*

"You know that her sins were many, and I tell you that they have been forgiven, and you can see, by her actions, that she loves much."

47, 48. *But to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven.*

What music that sentence "Thy sins are forgiven," must have been to her! "Ah!" says one, "I also should like to hear that sentence. Beyond everything else in the whole world would I desire to hear Jesus say to me, 'Thy sins are forgiven.'" Then put yourself in the place that this woman occupied. When Joab clung to the horns of the altar, he had to die there, but this woman had fled to the feet of Jesus, and she did not die there; nor shall you, but at those blessed feet, weeping for sin, and trusting the great Sin-bearer, you shall receive assurance of pardon: "Thy sins are forgiven."

49, 50. *And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also? And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.*

He did not want this young convert, this beginner in the Christian life, to hear the bickerings and controversies of these coarse spirits, so he said to her, "Go in peace;" and, dear soul, if you have begun to find out that, even in the Christian Church, there are many opinions concerning many things, do not trouble yourself about those things. This is enough for thee: "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace." There may be some who are called to contend for this or that point of the faith; but, as for thee, poor child, if, with thy broken heart, thou hast found the Saviour, and if thou lovest him with an inward, warm, and hearty love, do not spoil that love by getting into a controversial spirit: "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace."

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

TRIALS EXPECTED AND CONQUERED.

A Sermon

PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MARCH 31ST, 1904,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, March 12th, 1876.

"When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour: I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee."—Isaiah xliii. 2, 3.

EVEN down to the present day, the Jewish nation has not been destroyed. It has been made to pass through fire and through water. The story of the persecution of the Jews, both in earlier and later times, would fill many volumes with the most harrowing details. Had they not been a people whom God specially ordained to remain as his witnesses until the Messiah comes again, they must have utterly perished from among the sons of men. They have been a people scattered and peeled, rent and torn, hunted and harried; yet still they exist. For many a century, they were equally abhorred by the heathen and the so-called Christians; yet they have lived on, and they will continue to live on until a new heart and a right spirit shall be given unto them, and the Lord shall, in his great mercy, take away the blindness which in part has happened to Israel, so that they shall look on him whom they have pierced, and shall mourn for him as one mourneth for his only son. Then shall come the glory of the Gentiles, when more than the former glory of Israel shall be restored to her.

But, brethren, every promise in the Scriptures, of a spiritual nature, which is made to the literal people of Israel, and to the seed after the flesh, is, according to the inspired teaching of the apostle Paul, yet more fully made to the seed of Abraham after the spirit, for all believers are his spiritual seed. Was he not the father of all the faithful, not of the circumcision only, but of them also who are uncircumcised, if they trust in the living God? To us, then, as well as to the literal Israel, is this promise made; and to the Church of God, as a whole, will it be fulfilled, even as it has been fulfilled to her thus far. Her martyrologists have told us how often she has gone through fire and through water; but the floods have

not drowned her, neither have the flames consumed her. At this time, she standeth in a wealthy place; her Lord hath set her feet in a large room. Her banner still floateth upon the breeze. No weapon that is formed against her shall prosper, and every tongue that riseth against her in judgment she shall condemn. For her there is a noble destiny. Her full glory is not yet revealed; but we know that when her Heavenly Bridegroom shall appear in his glory, his bride shall share in it with him. Yes, brethren, we, who believe in Jesus, are on the winning side; we are on the side which has God with it, and Christ with it, and eternity with it; and the appointed day shall reveal that this is the conquering side.

But, further, this promise, while it applies to the whole Church of God, also applies to every individual in that Church, for it is a rule, with the promises of God, that you may break them up as small as you please, but they will still be after the same fashion as at the first. Like certain crystals, which, if you break them again, and again, and again, retain the same crystalline form, which is their natural form, so a divine promise, that is true to the whole corporate body of the Church, is also true to every one of the members of that Church, and true to every one of those members in every trial into which that member may be cast. Take ye, then, this promise to yourselves, beloved. Ye who are in Christ Jesus, and who worship God in the Spirit, claim this promise as made to you, just as much as if God had spoken it out of the excellent glory right into your ear, or as much as if you saw him writing, with his own eternal pen, these precious sentences as a personal epistle to you, for he does speak them and write them to you by his ever-blessed Spirit.

On looking at our text, we see that it very readily divides itself into three parts. The first is this, *trials must be expected by believers;* you may have to go through fire and through water. But, secondly, *trials will not be able to destroy you.* You have, in the text, the most express declaration that you shall neither be overwhelmed nor consumed. And, thirdly, *of this blessed fact, we have the very highest assurances given to us.* They are found in the third verse of this chapter, where we have argument after argument to prove to us that God will be with his people, to deliver them, when they are called to pass through rivers of trial or through fiery tribulations.

I. First, then, TRIALS ARE TO BE EXPECTED BY BELIEVERS.

I suppose that some young Christians imagine that the favourites of heaven will never be tried, but it is not so. The first verse of this chapter bids us fear not, for God has redeemed us, and called us by our names, and we are his; and we might, therefore, draw the conclusion that we should live at our ease, enjoy all manner of luxuries, and, as the chosen people of God, be protected from every wintry blast. Beloved, it is not so; if you are heirs of the kingdom of God, you are also, most assuredly, heirs of tribulation, for your Lord has declared, "In the world ye shall have tribulation." If you are soldiers in the army of Christ, you are not intended to win the victory without a conflict; and if you are ordained to wear a crown above, you are certainly equally ordained to bear a cross

below. Grace does not bring luxury in its train, nor does it lull us into a sweet slumber, and carry us to the skies—

"On flowery beds of ease."

No; we must fight if we would reign; we must suffer for Christ if we would be glorified with him. Our text speaks about all this as if it were a matter of course: "When thou passest through the waters; . . . and through the rivers; . . . . when thou walkest through the fire;" just as if we hardly needed to be told that it would be so.

Our text tells us that *these trials will be of various kinds.* We use the expression, "through fire and through water," to signify a variety of severe trials. If you are a true child of God, you will have to go through the waters; you will have to endure trial of a certain kind which will chill you to the very marrow,—trial which will seem to sweep you off your feet, take away from you your foothold, and carry you along, with its rapid current, whither it pleases. You must expect to have trials of that sort; and after you have endured them long, you must not delude yourself with the promise of relief; for, when one trouble has gone, another will come, and it will probably be of a different character from the last one you had, and will require the exercise of another kind of grace, and another form of watchfulness. Instead of being in the water, you will be in the fire; you will not be chilled now, but heated, like molten metal in a furnace, and the fierce flame will be all around you, alarming you, and filling you with dismay and distress. It is a different trial altogether from any that you had experienced before. You know how, in one day, the wind often blows from quite opposite quarters of the compass; and how, in a few hours, we have, first snow, then rain, then sunshine, then wind, then snow again, then sleet, and I scarcely know what beside,—a sort of epitome, in one day, of human life,—yet a strange day, as most human lives are,—a day one never wishes to have repeated, but is glad when it is over. God's children would not wish to live their lives over again, and they are glad when they come to the evening, and can undress, and go to the place of rest; but, in the meantime, if they are wise, they will expect a variety of trials to come to them.

And our text seems to intimate that *some of these trials will be very terrible ones:* "When thou passest through the rivers,"—strong, rapid rivers, that come rushing down from the hills, like Kishon, the mighty flood which swept away Jabin and his hosts;—deep, unfordable rivers, perhaps, through which, nevertheless, you will have to pass;—rivers which are like the Jordan, which overfloweth all its banks at the time of harvest. There will come to you trials like these, and it will sometimes seem as if you never could get over them,—as if, now, your Christian career must end, and end in failure, even as the pilgrim's course would end in drowning if, in attempting to ford a rapid river, he was swept away. And if the flood is so terrible, what shall I say of the fire? It is the nature of the flood to overwhelm, and it is the nature of the fire to consume.

There are certain trials that would overwhelm our faith, and speedily consume us if there were not a secret source of strength, divine, omnipotent, within our hearts, and round about us. If it were not true that "the Lord sitteth upon the flood: yea, the Lord sitteth King for ever," the rivers would long ago have overwhelmed us; and if it were not that he maketh the flaming fire to be his messenger, and the burning heat to be his servant, we should have been utterly consumed. But we shall not be, although the trial, if it could work in its own way, would have this result. You may quite expect that, between here and heaven, if you have not met with it yet, you will have enough trouble to destroy you utterly unless the Lord be your Helper. I suppose that the most of us can already sing, with the psalmist, "If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, now may Israel say; if it had not been the Lord who was on our side, when men rose up against us: then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us: then the waters had overwhelmed us, the stream had gone over our soul." But because the Lord has been with us, therefore our adversaries have not been able to prevail over us.

Our trials have not only been varied and terrible, but *they have been many times repeated.* I do not think it is merely the parallelism of the Hebrew poetry which requires the reduplication of the sentences here; or, if it be, yet even then we may suppose the poetry to be typical of the trials of the believer's life. We have to pass through the waters; and after that, through the waters again, only, this second time, it is called through the rivers. We are encompassed, at one time, with fire; and, by-and-by, the fire comes again; only, this time, it is called flame, as if the fire raged yet more furiously. No, my young friend, you have not done with temptation yet, and not even with the temptation which you have overcome, for it may return in another form. No, my brother, you have not seen the last of your corruption, not even of that corruption which you consider to be quite dead. You have not yet passed through all the trials which Satan will cause you, or which the world will cause you, or which the flesh will cause you. You will have to go through, not merely one river, but many rivers; and through, not simply one fire, but through many fires, before you come at last to God's right hand in glory. And this is sometimes the sharpest pinch of our tribulation, that it comes upon us again and again. We have all read, with great interest, the story of Job's many trials, and we have felt that the force of them was increased by the declaration of messenger after messenger, "I only am escaped alone to tell thee." First, the oxen and asses were stolen by the Sabeans, and the servants that were with them were killed; then, the sheep and their keepers were slain by lightning; then, the Chaldeans captured the camels, and slew the servants in charge of them; last of all, came the terrible tidings of the death of all his family. It was stroke upon stroke, sorrow upon sorrow, trouble upon trouble; and it is this repetition of trial that bows even a strong man down, and that makes the firmest believer begin to doubt and tremble. But, beloved, you

must expect wave upon wave, trial upon trial. You are not, as a soldier, after having fought one battle, to take off your regimentals, and retire to your tent, and say, "I have won the victory." That battle is but the beginning of a long campaign, and you will have to endure the smoke and dust of the battlefield, and the garments rolled in blood, time after time, before the victor's wreath shall at last surround your brow. So, your trials will be repeated, as well as varied and terrible.

And, mark you, according to the text, *these trials are inevitable:* "When thou passest through the waters." It is taken for granted that you have to go through them. There is no bridge, and there is no boat, by which you can pass over these waters, and no tunnel by which you can go underneath them; so you must go through them. Then it is added, "When thou walkest through the fire." There is nothing said about putting out the fire, or about waiting until the flame burns low, or the embers begin to cool; no, you have to go through the fire and through the water. You have not merely to dip your feet in the waves of trouble: you have to go through them. You have not merely to go, and just singe yourself a little at the flame; it is through the fire that you have to go, and that fire will be like Nebuchadnezzar's furnace when it was heated seven times hotter than usual. It is not a fire for you to warm your hands at; you have to tread those glowing coals,—possibly, with bare feet. Are you prepared to endure that fiery ordeal? Can you so trust in the living God as to feel sure that, when you get into the midst of the burning fiery furnace, there will be with you one like unto the Son of God, who will preserve you by his gracious presence? God does not promise his people any immunity from trouble; in fact, he has foretold that they shall have trouble. As there is no royal road to learning, so there is no royal road to heaven.

> "The path of sorrow, and that path alone,
> Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown."

Make up your mind that you have to go through those trials, and ask the Lord to give you grace and courage that you may be able to endure unto the end. These trials of the saints are appointed and ordained, and they have their destined end; so, depend upon it, if you are a child of God, you will have more or less of them. If you have more, then you shall have the more consolation. If you have less, you may be grateful for the Lord's tenderness towards you, and not wish for more. But rest assured that all God's children will be baptized with fire. He has had one Son without sin, but he has never had one child without suffering; all the sons and daughters of God are brought under the rod of the covenant, and are made to feel the chastising strokes of their wise Father's hand.

II. Now, secondly, I have to remind you that TRIALS SHALL NOT DESTROY BELIEVERS.

First of all, *they shall not divide believers from their God.* That would be destruction indeed; but it can never be. Notice the first sentence of our text: "When thou passest through the waters." But, my Lord, will those waters roll between thee and me? No;

for "I will be with thee." Then, Lord, let them roll; for I can say, with the apostle Paul, "I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." "Quis separabit?" "Who shall separate us?" asks the apostle; and the answer is, "None shall separate us," for God and his people are indivisible. If I said no more, and sat down, there would be enough comfort, I think, in that thought, to make you ready to rush through floods and flames where Jesus leads the way. "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee." You shall not have less of God because you are poor, or because you are sick, or because your mother is taken from you, or your children are, one by one, caught up into heaven. Oh, no! in your losses, and crosses, and troubles, you shall realize the presence of God even more conspicuously than you have ever done before. Our text does not say, "When thou shalt tread the flowery mount, and rest upon the soft green bank, I will be with thee." I never remember reading, in the Scriptures, a promise of that kind, or one like this: "When you walk upon close-shaven grass, which seems like a carpet beneath your feet, I will be with you." No; but God says, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee." He gives a special promise for a special time of trial; and to meet the doubt which has so troubled his child, he says, "Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine."

Then our text tells us that *neither the waters nor the fires shall stop the believer's march:* "When thou *passest through* the waters, I will be with thee." It does not say, "When you get to the waters, you shall stop there." They cannot stop us; we are to go through them. Our way to heaven lies through that flood; then, through that flood we will go. God has ordained that no troubles, however great, and no persecutions, however terrible, shall stop the onward march of a soul predestinated to eternal joy. Suppose it is a deep and rapid river, whose swollen torrent seems to sweep everything before it. We shall go through it; we shall neither be stopped by it, nor swept away by it, for the promise is, "When thou passest through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee."

But what about the fire? Can we get through that? Surely, we are not fireproof; we wear no asbestos garment that shall preserve us from the devouring flames. Yes, brethren, you shall pass through the fire as well as through the water; our text implies that your march through the flame shall be quiet, and calm, and safe, for the Lord says, "When thou *walkest* through the fire, thou shalt not be burned." There is no need to quicken your usual pace. If I had to go through literal fire, I should want to run and leap through it, but the believer is, spiritually, to walk through the fire. That is a beautiful passage in the 23rd Psalm: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil." Walking is the pace at which men go when nothing distresses or alarms them. "He that believeth shall not make haste," but shall

walk even through the fire. What a blessing it is that, as no trouble shall separate us from God, so no trouble shall hinder our progress towards heaven; but, through divine grace, whether floods or flames are in the way, we shall go through them!

Our text further says that *some trials, which threaten to overwhelm us, shall not be able to do so:* "The rivers . . . shall not overflow thee." You may be carried off your feet, and have to take to swimming,—the blessed swimming of faith, which casts itself upon divine strength, and spreadeth out its hands as the bold swimmer doth. The water will sometimes, perhaps, be near your head for a minute, the spray will dash into your eyes, and the brine will be in your throat; but the waves shall not overflow you, however furiously they may rage around you. There are some trials which seem as if they must crush the life out of those to whom they come. Possibly, you are saying, "I do believe, but I am in such a turmoil, that my mind seems quite upset. I am exceedingly sorrowful, almost to the death of my faith." Ah! but it shall not be quite to the death of thy faith; the floods shall not overflow thee.

Other trials seem as if they would consume you, as if, with fierce and burning vehemence, they would destroy you as a martyr burns at the stake. But what says our text? "When thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." You shall not lose faith, or hope, or love, or patience, or any Christian grace; you shall come out of the fire as you went into it;—nay, you shall be improved by the flame, for our text says, if we read it in the Hebrew, "When thou passest through the fire, thou shalt not be scorched, neither shall the flame burn thee." We remember that, when those three brave witnesses for God came out of the burning fiery furnace, not so much as the smell of fire had passed upon them. I think I see the Babylonians crowding around them, and asking, in amazement, "Are these men alive? We saw the guards, who cast them into the fire, consumed by the great heat of the furnace, and are these men alive who were actually in the midst of the flames?" They had to come close, and touch them, to make sure that they were not ghosts or apparitions. When they had grasped the hand of one of the three, to see whether it was alive, they next would want to examine it. But had not the fire scorched their eyebrows, or their hair? No, "the fire had no power; nor was a hair of their head singed." They were just as they were when they went into the burning fiery furnace. It was very wonderful; and, in like manner, the child of God, sustained by divine grace, will be none the worse for all his troubles. Look at Job after all his trials. The Lord gave him twice as much as he had before; and he was neither the weaker, nor the less honourable, for all he had been called to endure. Nay, he was a gainer by it all. O brethren, the gold loses nothing in the fire but what it is glad to lose! The silver in the crucible loses none of its real preciousness, it only loses its alloy. So shall it be with you, beloved.

III. The latter part of our text supplies us with THE ARGUMENTS AND ASSURANCES WHICH GO TO PROVE THAT THIS WILL BE THE CASE WITH BELIEVERS.

And the first is, "*For I am Jehovah.*" Ah, brethren, if you and I are trusting to anything short of the one living and true God, the rivers will overwhelm us, and the fires will consume us; but if our living faith rests on the living God, it is not possible for us to have reason to be ashamed or confounded, world without end. I ask without any fear as to the answer that may be given to me,—Did any man ever trust in God, and find himself forsaken? Has it ever come to pass, in all the history of the Church of God, that one single heir of heaven has had cause to be ashamed of his hope and his belief in his God? If you rely on an arm of flesh, you will soon find it fail you. If you turn to idol gods, and earthly priests, they will all prove useless to you in your hour of trial; but it is not so with any who trust in the Lord. Have we not seen the saints on their death-beds,—ay, seen them in excruciating pain, and in deep depression of spirit? Yet they have never been ashamed of staying themselves upon their God. They have always found this to be an infallible protection in the time of their deepest need: "I am Jehovah." Now, child of God, are you afraid of the fire, or are you afraid of the flood, when you have the self-existent, eternal, almighty, unchangeable God to trust to? O man, be afraid to be afraid, and fear to fear; but trust in God at all times; and, with dauntless courage, go wherever he leads or points the way! It is the living God in whom you trust; therefore, when you pass through the rivers, they shall not overflow you; when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned.

The next assurance lies in the words, "*thy God*": "I am the Lord thy God." Ah, the God, in whom you trust, is your own God, the God who, in an everlasting covenant, has taken you to be his servant, and has given himself to you, to be your Father, your Friend, your All-in-all,—in a word, your God. Now, my dearest earthly friend may fail me; the choicest companion I have may forget me; but my God never will. There is an enduring relationship, which can never end in disappointment. "'I am thy God.' Thine, for I chose thee; thine, for I redeemed thee; thine, for I have taken thee to be mine, and I have made myself to be thine in the covenant of everlasting love. Trust me, then, for 'I am thy God,' so I cannot forsake thee. 'Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, she may forget, yet will I not forget thee.' 'I am Jehovah thy God.' If I am nobody else's God, I am thy God; so, 'when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame even scorch thee.'"

Now turn to the next words, "*the Holy One of Israel.*" When David wrote, "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name," why did he select the holiness of God's name as the object of special blessing? If you sound the word a little differently, you will see that holiness is *whole*-ness, and that is one of its meanings. God is holy or whole. His holiness comprehends all his other attributes. If there were a failure in any one of the moral attributes of God, he would not be whole, or holy; but there is no such failure. So, now, the whole of God—the holy

God—guarantees to the believer that he shall be preserved in all perils and trials. You are not trusting to a god that can lie, or that can break his promise, for he is "the Holy One of Israel." You are not relying upon one who will divorce his people, whom he hath espoused unto himself, for the Lord, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away. You are not trusting to one who, after all, will repent of what he has promised, and not fulfil it, for "God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" The holiness of God is terrible to an unreconciled soul; but, to a heart that is reconciled to God, the holiness of God's nature is a pledge that every one of his promises shall be kept, and that not one jot or tittle of all that he hath guaranteed to his people shall fail to come to them. Look, then, believer, at the guarantees of thy safety which thou hast in the very nature of thy God. Whether the rivers flow about thee, or the raging seas roar in thine ears, or the furnace pours forth its vehement heat, or the prairie be on fire all around thee, thou art at all times safe.

Then there is a further word of assurance: "the Holy One of Israel, *thy Saviour.*" Now, to be true to his name, he must save all who trust in him. Why does he call himself the Saviour, and especially put in the words "thy Saviour", if he does not save, and save thee? Come, believer, surely it needs no words of mine to draw out the force of this argument. If he doth not save, he is not a Saviour; and if he doth not save thee, he is not thy Saviour; but if thou believest on him, he will redeem his word,—every iota of it. As honourable business men meet their bills and notes of hand when they become due, so will the honourable God fulfil his word, and prove himself to be the Saviour of all who trust in him. In six troubles, he will be with you; and in seven, there shall no evil befall you. He has promised to save you, and he will save you. He will rest in his love; he will rejoice over you with singing. "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth him out of them all." That is his own word, and that word will be kept to the very letter. He is "thy Saviour."

The last assurance is, in some respects, the strongest of all: "*I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee;*" by which the Lord means, "I will surely preserve you, because I have bought you at such a great price that I cannot afford to lose you. I have shown my valuation of you by the price I have paid for you, so you may rest assured that I will not suffer any harm to come to those whom I have so dearly purchased." You remember that the Israelites were redeemed by the Egyptians being made to suffer. You recollect how the plagues thickened about the heads of Egypt's sons, and that Ethiopia and Seba were conquered by the Assyrian turning his forces against them instead of against the Israelites. And, since then, it has often happened that God has succoured his saints by allowing other people to feel the force of the sword which was turned aside from the godly. When the poor persecuted Protestants of France or Piedmont were likely to be destroyed, it

generally happened either that the kings of Germany and France fell out, or else that France went to war with Spain, and then the soldiers were recalled, and the poor saints had a little liberty. God had given other nations as a ransom for them, and so he will do again when it is necessary. He will blot whole nations out of the map of Europe, or the map of Asia, or any other part of the world, for the sake of his people. What cares he for them in comparison with his own chosen ones? In the olden days, he set the bounds of the nations according to the number of the children of Israel; and he will do the same for the spiritual Israel. All the world is but peel or rind, but his Church is the sweet fruit. All the universe is only as the shell, but the kernel inside the shell is his own redeemed.

But, in a higher sense, God has paid a far greater price than this for the redemption of his people,—something infinitely more precious than Egypt with all her treasures, or Ethiopia with all her gold, or Seba with all her fragrance. Did he not give his Son to die for his people; and if Christ redeemed me with his blood, is not my safety guaranteed, not only against flood and flame, but against the very gates of hell? Think you, beloved, that the death of Christ can be in vain? Do you believe that he bought with his blood some who, after all, shall be cast into hell? I know that there is a general aspect to redemption, which brings some good things to all men; but there is also the special aspect in it, which brings all good things to some men. "Christ loved the Church, and gave himself for it." He hath redeemed us from among men. The good Shepherd laid down his life for his sheep. Christ said, concerning his disciples, "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me." And did he really, specially, and with an eye to my salvation, lay down his precious life as a ransom for me; and shall God, after having given me to his Son, let me fail to come into the possession of him who redeemed me with his blood? I confess that I am unable to conceive of such a thing as being possible. Once redeemed with the blood of the Son of God, who could again enslave the soul that has been thus set free? Go where thou wilt, redeemed one, the bloodmark is upon thee, and "the Lord knoweth them that are his." According to the notion of some people, redemption does not guarantee salvation to anybody; but our text directly contradicts such a theory as that. It is because we are redeemed that we shall be saved; that is the reason why there are saints already in heaven, and why they will be there for ever and ever. Redemption is the pledge of their eternal safety. If Christ should lose any one of his redeemed,—if God should lose any one of those who were so dearly purchased, what a terrible result it would be! Then, from the depths of hell, the blaspheming fiend would look up, and cry, "Aha! here is a soul that was redeemed by the blood of Jesus, a soul that believed in Jesus, yet he could not save it from destruction. When it came to the river, it was drowned, or it was consumed by the fire. Aha! Thou callest thyself the Redeemer, but thou hast not redeemed this one."

Now I am going to conclude my discourse by asking one or two

questions. My dear brethren and sisters in Christ, have you not proved, in your experience, that what I have been saying is true? I see, before me, some who have been through fire and through water. The whiteness of their hair betokens that they have been pilgrims for a long while. You, my aged friends, have the snows of many a winter upon your brows; and the furrows of many a care are there also. Well, what have you to say concerning your God? Has he ever failed you? You have had many sharp pinches; but has he ever left you in them? You have had heavy burdens to bear; but have they broken your back? You have had stern trials; but has your faith ever altogether failed? Brothers and sisters, I think we, who have had any experience of the ways of God, might stand up, and sing good Samuel Medley's verse,—

> "When trouble, like a gloomy cloud,
> Has gather'd thick and thunder'd loud,
> He near my soul has always stood,
> His lovingkindness, oh, how good!"

Then there is another question that I want to put. If the Lord has dealt with you thus up till now, what aileth thee that thou shouldst have any fear about the future? "Ah!" say you, "but I have not passed this way heretofore." I know you have not; but, then, all the way you have already trodden was new to you until you came to it, and the Lord helped you then. Why should he not help you now, and for all the future too? "Ah, but there will be changing circumstances!" I know there will, but there will not be changing promises. "Ah, but I find such frequent changes in myself!" Very likely you do; but do you find any change in the Lord? That is where your confidence is to be placed; in the Lord, not in yourselves. Brethren and sisters, if you never doubt your Lord till you have just cause to do so, you will never doubt him at all; and if you never have any mistrust of his goodness till he betrays your confidence in him, you will never mistrust him. Is it not a base thing, on our part, to get down in the dumps so readily as we do, and to fret, and worry ourselves, the moment a little cloud appears in the sky? Let it not be so with us; let us, who have believed, enter into rest, as our Lord intended that we should. We shall just as assuredly wear the crown of final victory as we have fought and won our first battle, for the grace that enables us to begin the conflict will never forsake us, but will help us to conclude the campaign, however long it may last. So let us raise our song of holy confidence, and sing it all our journey through; for, perhaps, the sweetness of our notes of praise may be heard by others, and may draw them also to go on pilgrimage with us, trusting in the Lord.

Last of all, what are some of you doing,—you who never did trust in God? Well, you say, you have got on so far, somehow. I cannot make out how you do it. If I had not a God to trust in, though I have many earthly comforts, I should be of all men most miserable; but I cannot understand how a suffering man, with a large family, and small wages, manages to live without God. I

cannot comprehend how a hard-working woman, with many children, and, perhaps, a drunken husband, contrives even to exist without trusting in God. Oh dear, dear, dear, dear, dear, dear! Why, your life is not worth five minutes' purchase; I should not like to give you even a bad farthing for it, you do seem to have such a wretched lot. Then, some of you, business people, with all your cares, and worries, and troubles,—up early in the morning, and working till late at night; what is it all for? Saving a little money? For whom are you saving it? Who will have it when you die? Somebody, who will call you a fool for saving it, very likely. What are you, other people, living for? "Oh, we have our amusements!" Yes, yes, yes; I daresay; and wonderful stuff the amusements of the world are made of nowadays! Passing along the streets, I sometimes hear one of the songs that are being sung, and I cannot help feeling that the common songs, that are sung in our streets, would be a disgrace to apes if they were to sing them, they are so meaningless and absurd, if not worse than that. People sometimes ask me, "What sort of amusements would you have us go into?" I know they only do it for an excuse, so I answer, "You know what you like." "Ah!" says one, "but I am a Christian." Well, if you are a Christian, you will not care for the amusements of worldlings, you will count them as unclean, and not fit for you. I always say, "Let the dogs have their biscuits, and the cats their meat, and the hogs their wash, and let the worldling have his amusement, I don't want to rob him of it. It really is such poor, poor stuff, that they must be poor, poor creatures who can make themselves happy on it." A bag of wind,—that is all the world's amusement is. When I hear how fashionable people spend an evening, and go away saying how delighted they were, I think they must have been out of the way when brains were being distributed, or else they would say, "Dear me, this is a wretched way of wasting time: I cannot endure it." You have not anything, O ye worldlings, even ye who dwell in palaces, and ride in chariots, ye who have great riches, ye who have broad acres, ye have not anything fit to feed a soul upon. It is all wind, chaff, husks, such as the poor prodigal could not fill his belly with; yet you eat it. How is that? I do not understand you. I go back to what I said before. If I had all that my heart could wish for,—I have that already, for I do not wish for anything more than I have in this world;—but if I had all that my heart could wish for, supposing that it took to ambition and covetousness, yet should I be wretched without my God. I cannot live without him. I should be like Noah's dove when it was flying over the wild waste of waters; I could not find a place where I could rest if I were to try to do so, I must go back to my Noah, to my ark, there is no other place of rest for me. Poor soul, how is it that you think there is rest for you anywhere but in Christ? Come back, you with the weary wing, come back to God. Come back, you with the weary heart, come back to your Saviour's bosom.

May God bless you all, for Christ's sake! Amen.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

GOOD CHEER FOR THE NEEDY.

A Sermon

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DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Thursday Evening, March 16th, 1876.

"For the needy shall not alway be forgotten: the expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever."—Psalm ix. 18.

THESE words will fall upon different ears with quite different effects. If any of you are, in the Scriptural sense, "poor and needy," God the Holy Spirit will enable you to see much in these gracious sentences; but if you fancy that you are "rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing," you will care nothing whatever for such words as these. You know right well that the value of a text to any soul depends upon the condition of that soul. I know not how many stars may be visible at the present moment; I do not think that I even looked up at them before I came here, and perhaps you have not; but to the mariner, who wants to know his position when far out upon the sea, even one lone star gleaming amid the cloud-rack may be very precious. So, if you are among the poor and needy ones, the light in this text will be most joyful to your heart; but if you are not among them, perhaps you will scarcely condescend to look up to see its light. When Richard I. was shut up within the gloomy walls of a foreign prison, you remember that he heard a song sung by his faithful friend, who was traversing all Europe, as a troubadour, to try to find him. There were many ears that heard that strain; and, possibly, some of the listeners had noticed the sweetness of the music; yet there was nothing very special in it to them; but the imprisoned king, when he heard that song, could sing the refrain to it, and, therefore, it had a peculiar value to him, for it re-opened his intercourse with the world outside, and ultimately led to his release. So, it may be that my text has a refrain that you do not know; and if it is so, you will not care for it; but if your heart is very poor,—if you are consciously very needy,—if you are reduced to spiritual destitution, then these simple words, "The needy shall not alway be forgotten:

the expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever," will awake echoes in your soul which will be the means of bringing you great joy.

Here let me remark what a blessed thing it is to be poor in spirit and down among the lowly in heart. The best things come to those who are in such a condition. Up there, on the mountain tops, you are in a conspicuous but very cold position. If there are any storms about, they will be sure to gather around the mountain's brow; but if there be waterbrooks, they will be sure to flow down there in the quiet seclusion of the valley, where the nourishing grass grows for the feeding of the sheep. He who dwells in the Valley of Humiliation, lives in a place where he may delight himself with safety; because he is certain, while he abides there, to give all the glory for his delights to his God. It is not a land that every man chooseth; it lies too low for some men's tastes. There are those who love the high places of the earth, where they can exalt themselves; but he who is wise will choose to be numbered amongst the hungry whom the Lord filleth with good things, and not among the rich whom he sendeth away empty. He will delight to be reckoned among those that are of low degree, whom God exalteth, even the humble and the meek; and he will not wish to be gathered with the proud, against whom the Lord has registered his solemn declaration that he will stain the pride of their glory.

If you look at our text as it stands, it bears, first of all, the literal and natural meaning that God will take care of the poor and needy. As a general rule, they are forgotten. In the regulations of many kingdoms, no provision whatever has been made for the poor. Christianity has done much to cause modern governments to make some recognition of the rights of the poor and needy, and also to provide to some extent for them; yet this provision is often handed out to them with great coldness and sternness. Our poor laws are not, even with the best intentions, always administered justly; while there are lands where everything seems to be done to increase the riches of the rich, and to make the poor still poorer. Well, it will not always be so; there are better days coming for you that are despised, and poor, and needy. You need not fight, and strive, and be envious, and make discord; there is One in heaven who is your Helper, and he is coming down to earth again; and when he cometh, "he shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor." The reign of Jesus Christ, though it may seem to be long in beginning, will assuredly come at the appointed time; and when it cometh, then all tyranny and oppression and wrong-doing shall be speedily ended. "In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth." In his days shall no man be robbed of his rights,—no man be down-trodden,—no man be oppressed. Behold, the Lord hath laid help upon One who is mighty; he hath exalted One chosen out of the people. His coming is the world's hope; his appearing will be the signal for the world's deliverance from all that is opposed to him and to his gospel.

But I am going to take our text in a spiritual sense, and refer it to those who are "poor and needy" in the Scriptural meaning of

those words. This is a description that is very frequently applied to the people of God. They have been taught, by the Spirit of God, to realize their poverty; they know it, and they confess it. They also feel that they have many needs; indeed, they seem to themselves now to have more needs than they ever had before; and were it not for the infinite fulness which is treasured up in Christ, the very thought of their needs would crush them, and drive them to despair. "Poor and needy" is a fair and full description of all those who have been taught of the Lord to see themselves as they really are in his sight.

I want to give some good cheer to the poor and the needy, and my text seems to me to refer to three pairs of things which concern them. First, it speaks of *two bitter experiences which will come to an end;* then, *two sad fears which are removed by the text;* and, thirdly, *two precious promises which are given to us in the text.*

I. First, there are TWO BITTER EXPERIENCES, which many of God's people—nay, all God's people—have more or less had, especially if they happen to be poor and needy in temporal things as well as in spiritual.

The first bitter experience is that *they have been forgotten.* The text says, "The needy shall not alway be forgotten," plainly implying that they have been forgotten;—forgotten by those who used to know them; forgotten by those who fed at their table, and who lauded and flattered them in the days of their high estate. They do not know you now. You are the same, but your coat is different, your house is different, your purse is different; and, therefore, though they loved you,—oh, so fervently!—their love is gone now because the various adjuncts, which, after all, were the real ground of their love, have departed. The leaves are withering, so the swallows, which gathered in the summer, are all gone before the winter comes. Many friends are of that sort; their friendship withers like the leaves of autumn; and, like the swallows, they are gone to find other summers somewhere else. If you become prosperous again, and get another summer, they will come back, and seek to ingratiate themselves with you again. Like dogs, they will follow you as long as you have a bone to give them; but, unlike many dogs, they will not stay with you even when you have nothing to bestow upon them. If you are a poor man, who was once better off, you have passed through this bitter experience, I have no doubt, and have been forgotten because your circumstances have changed.

Possibly, you have been forgotten ever since you have been a Christian. While you were self-righteous, like other men, they knew and respected you. You helped to keep each other's self-righteousness up, just as tradesmen, with their accommodation bills, help to keep each other financially afloat. But you suddenly became poor in spirit; you began to see that you needed a better righteousness than your own. They called you melancholy; and no wonder that they did, for you were indeed melancholy. You were very uncongenial company for them; you used to heave a deep sigh when they would rather have heard a noisy laugh; and now that you have gone right over, as they say, to the Puritanic party, and

left their merry-making, they have forgotten you,—they do not know you,—they look down upon you, and despise you. They say, sometimes, "You are a canting hypocrite," and they have other equally pretty names that they apply to you. If they remember you, it is that they may scoff at you; but they say they have forgotten you, and it is a great mercy if they have; and it will be another great mercy if you also forget them. There is a message, in the 45th Psalm, which may be addressed to you: "Forget also thine own people, and thy father's house; so shall the King greatly desire thy beauty: for he is thy Lord; and worship thou him." You are to go without the camp, bearing Christ's reproach, and to be forgotten by your former friends and acquaintances because of your religion. It will be a painful ordeal to you, but you may go through it without any very serious loss.

Possibly, too, dear friends, you have often thought that you have been forgotten in the arrangements of God's people, since you have come among them. You are so needy, perhaps in pocket, but certainly in spirit, that when arrangements have been made for the help and relief of others, you fancy that you have been overlooked. Do not be quite certain that it is so, for I have known some poor people, who have been a little too sensitive on those points, and have suspected unkindness when everything has been really planned for the best. Do not be ready to misjudge your fellow-Christians if they are better off than you are. As it would be a sin, on their part, to be proud, it would be equally a sin, on your part, to be envious. It would be wrong for them to be unkind to you, but it would be just as wrong for you to be unkind to them by thinking that they are unkind when they are not. Still, I should not wonder if it does sometimes happen that you fancy yourself forgotten even in the arrangements that are made in connection with the house of God.

So, too, you may have had the experience of seeming to be forgotten in various regulations which are passed by your fellow-Christians. For instance, someone has been declaring the proportion that every Christian should give to the cause of God out of his substance. It has been laid down by some, as a hard and fast rule, that nobody should give less than a tenth,—a good rule, mark you, and a rule applicable to nearly everybody; but, sometimes, there is a needy saint, who says, "I could not spare a tenth from my poor pittance; I can scarcely spare a penny from the little that I have, so this rule presses hardly upon me." Well, then, give what you feel to be right, and do not trouble about the matter. When we speak to various classes, we cannot always mention the exceptions; you know that there are exceptions to all rules, and we do not wish any rule to press hardly upon anyone. The poor widow gave her two mites, and so may you; but do not fret and worry, though I have no doubt it sometimes pains you when, in such utterances, you seem to be forgotten.

It is also very painful to a Christian, who is poor and needy in spirit, when, in the preaching of the gospel, there seems to be nothing for the poor lame sheep, for the halting, for those that are

weak-kneed, for those that are ready to perish. I have heard sermons, which have related to very glorious experiences, in which I have taken some delight; but I have felt, all the while, "I wonder what the poor weaklings of the flock think of this, when they hear about this experience, and are told that they can have it if they like, and that they must have it, or else they have no real saving faith at all." At such a time, my mind always goes to those who can only touch the hem of the Saviour's garment, or say to him, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." My witness is that some of the best children in the whole family of God never have the enjoyment of full assurance; but they are so careful, so watchful, so sensitive, that their very sadness of heart drives them close to Christ. They seem to be so conscious of their own weakness, and so afraid of sinning against God, that, though in them there is not the perfect love that casteth out fear,—I wish it were;—yet I would be the last to condemn them. There is One, who will not condemn them; even he who carries the lambs in his bosom, and who is tender and pitiful to all the weak ones in his flock. We must mind, when we are preaching experience, that we do not so put the experience of the strong as to make it the standard for the weak. That is almost as wrong as to make the experience of the weak to be the standard of the strong, as some have done. The fact is, there is no experience that is a real standard of the Christian life except the experience of a change of heart, and of simple faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Ah, dear heart! I know what you mean when, after listening to a sermon, you have said, "Alas, I am forgotten! There seems nothing there for me. There are no crumbs for those who have lost their teeth, and have only sore gums; there is no bread and milk for the children. It is all rounds of beef,—strong meat for grown-up men; but, woe is me, there is nothing that I can eat." I should not wonder if that is what you have felt; but, if so, do not feel it any longer, "for the needy shall not alway be forgotten."

And, peradventure, up till now, you have even experienced a forgetfulness on the part of providence as you have understood the term. Others of your family have risen in the world, but you have not. Your friends have set up in business, and have done well; but you have not. You have sought to obtain a competence, but you have not secured it yet. You wished, at any rate, to get out of financial trouble; but you are in it still, and you are apt to fear that, when the Lord distributes his favours, he forgets you;—at least, so far as his providential mercies are concerned. Well, now, let this fear be gone, I pray you; let this bitter experience come to an end. Believe that you are not forgotten, after all, by him who is in heaven, and who beholdeth all his people; and if you have experienced, in some measure, a sort of forgetfulness, real on the part of man, but never real on the part of God, do believe that it will not last for ever.

The second painful experience is that *you have been disappointed*, as well as fancied that you have been forgotten. Our text says, "The expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever," which implies that it has perished sometimes.

Now, dear friend, I know that, if you are a Christian, you have had some of your expectations that have perished, and a good many of them, too. Why, you expected, at one time, to find your own way to heaven,—you expected that your own righteousness would make you acceptable to God, and that you could do everything that was necessary to gain his favour. That foolish expectation has perished for ever, has it not? Your self-righteousness is such a mass of filthy rags that you never mean to try to patch those old rags together, and make them into a garment to wear in the sight of God.

Then, you thought that you might expect, when you believed in Jesus Christ, that you would have perfect peace directly. Yet, possibly, you did not have it. Believer as you were, you had to live by faith, without much experience of inward joy. And you also expected that you would never be troubled any more with any sort of bitter experiences, certainly not with any sins. You had lost your burden at the foot of the cross, and you meant to go singing all the way to heaven; in fact, you imagined that you were to ride there, in a carriage, in a most luxurious and delightful style, having two heavens,—one here, and another hereafter. That expectation has not been realized, has it? You have found that the way to heaven is a rough road, that there are many hardships in the pilgrim's pathway, and that there are giants to be fought and slain. Alas, also, there are sins within that have to be contended with from day to day.

Perhaps you had even entertained some very high expectations that you were going to be one of the brightest stars that ever shone among the spiritual constellations of God. Oh, what wonders you were going to do! You were going to be the leader amongst the people of God. There would be no diminution of zeal in you; no lack of life in you; no declension from grace in you; no neglected prayer in you. You would be the very paragon of virtue; you would push the world before you, and drag the church behind you. I do not know how high your expectations soared; but I should not wonder if some of them have perished before now, and you have come down to be, even in your own estimation, a very ordinary sort of person; in fact, you have continued to grow smaller and smaller ever since you have known Christ, till now you have come down to be nothing, and you are on the way to being less than nothing; and you will be wonderfully near the mark when you get down to that point.

How many human expectations turn out to be mere wind! As I studied my text, turning it over and over again, it occurred to me that the needy, the poor, are generally the people who have the greatest expectations. I have talked with many poor men, and I have found, over and over again, that they have a great, great uncle, somewhere or other, who may leave them a lot of money some day; or else they think they are entitled to property somewhere, only the lawful owner keeps them out of it! They have proofs that there was someone in their family who left—well, I do not know whether it was not some millions of money, that now lie in the

Bank of England, and they are expecting to get them! Ah, he that butters his bread with such expectations will find it very dry; and he who waits till expectations of that kind are fulfilled will, I am afraid, find that he is waiting in vain. But poor people generally have plenty of expectations; and, as a rule, those expectations come to an end. This is a part of the bitter experiences of life, and always will be; so, let us bear it patiently, for our text assures us that our disappointment shall only be temporary.

II. Now, in the second place, there are TWO SAD FEARS, WHICH THE TEXT REMOVES.

The first sad fear is that, perhaps, *we may be for ever forgotten of God*. Oh, what a sad day it would be for us if God should ever forget us! You remember what varied experiences David had. Once he wrote, "In my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved. Lord, by thy favour thou hast made my mountain to stand strong: thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled." At another time, he wrote, "Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?" Ah, that is how the greatest saints have to talk sometimes; but what a fall in the barometer that indicates! From being up there at "set fair," it has gone down to "much rain" and "storms." "Zion said, the Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me." This fear will come to the child of God at certain times; it may take this shape,—"What if God should forget me in my present trouble? None but he can get me out of it. I am so bowed down and distressed that, without divine consolation, I know that I shall surely sink in the deep waters; yet the consolation does not come, the help I need does not arrive. I cannot see any way of escape, and I am as much in perplexity now as I was six months ago. I have made it a matter of prayer, and waiting on the Lord; but I sometimes fear that he has forgotten me. What shall I do if he never helps me? If it had not been the Lord who was on my side, I should long ago have sunk into despair; but what shall I do if he deserts me now? I can never escape out of this difficulty without him."

Possibly, the believer is not so much in temporal trouble as burdened under a sense of sin. He used to feel joy and peace through believing in Christ; but he has wandered away from fellowship with his God, and God is walking contrary to him because he is walking contrary to God. He is dwelling under his Father's frown; he is smarting under his Father's rod. Now he says within himself, "What will happen to me if he should never again give me the kiss of reconciliation?" He cries, "Deal mercifully with thy servant, O Lord, and restore unto me the joy of thy salvation!" Yet still he walks in darkness, and sees no light. He is under a cloud, and his cry is, "Oh, that I knew where I might find him whom my soul loveth!" There comes to his heart the horrible fear that God has forsaken him. It is a horrible fear, but it is quite unfounded; there is no real reason for it. God cannot forget his chosen ones, whom he has graven upon the palms of his hands; and though a woman may forget her sucking child, God cannot forget any of his people, sorrowful or sinful though they may be.

Then, too, this thought will come: "I am sick; my health is failing; I have less strength every day; and, soon, I shall have to go through the cold river of death; and what if, then, I should be without my God? It will be hard to suffer, and harder still to die, —to leave the warm precincts of this house of clay, and, as a disembodied spirit, to be launched into an unknown world; what if there should be no guardian angels around my dying bed, and no Saviour to receive my departing spirit? What if, after all, my hope should turn out to be a delusion, my faith a fiction, and my experience a dream?" I do not wonder, when such thoughts as these cross your minds, that you should feel distressed, as hundreds before you have been, "who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage." But our text is a blessed cure for this sad fear: "For the needy shall not alway be forgotten."

The other dreadful fear is, *lest, after all, your expectation should perish.* Your expectation, beloved, is that, since you have trusted in God, you shall never be confounded;—and that, because you have relied upon the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ, you shall be numbered with his saints in glory everlasting. Yet, sometimes, you sorrowfully say, "Shall I hold on to the end? Shall I be able to persevere? I am so weak, so unstable, so apt to slip and slide, that I fear what will happen to me. Will my hope endure to the end?" Then you look around, and see the strong temptations that beset your path; you live, perhaps, where there are few Christians to help you, and where everything seems to go against your progress in the divine life; and you say, "I shall surely one day fall by the hand of the enemy. How can I hope to outlive these many perils and dangers?"

Possibly, your constitutional temperament is a hindrance to you, and you cry, "Woe is me, because I have such corruptions within,—such a fierce temper,—such a cold heart,—such a penurious disposition. Can I ever, after all, be fashioned into the likeness of my Lord? Can such gritty granite as my soul is made of be ever melted down, and run into the divine mould, or be turned like wax to the divine seal?" It does make you fear and tremble; especially when trials come, the like of which you never saw before; and you say, "My expectation will perish. I thought that, by God's grace, I should leap over a wall, and break through a troop; I hoped that I should continue to trust in the Lord even though all creature aid should fail; but now I tremble and fear. I have run with the footmen, and they have wearied me; what shall I do when I have to contend with horses; and, above all, what shall I do in the swellings of Jordan?" Well, now, this is the sort of fear that arises in the hearts of God's children; yet that fear need not be entertained for a single moment. It is your duty and privilege to shut it out of your heart, for thus saith the Lord, "The expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever."

III. Now I come to our third and last point,—TWO PRECIOUS PROMISES ARE HERE GIVEN TO US.

The first is given to the needy, and it declares that *they shall not always be forgotten.* Possibly, some of you think that you have been

forgotten in the arrangements of providence. Listen, troubled one. If you can only wait with patience, and stand still, and see the salvation of God, you will find that the needy shall not always be forgotten. Have you never noticed how a father carves for a large family? You do not expect him, at a single stroke, to carve enough to fill every plate, do you? There is a little child who is ill, so there must be a suitable portion sent away for that one; and, likely enough, that will be the first portion sent from the table. Then the father serves his other children according to a certain order which he has in his own mind, and there must be some who come after the others. I have known carvers keep someone waiting till they have reached the most juicy part of the meat; they only made him wait till they could give him something specially choice; so, if you are kept waiting for your portion, you will not lose anything by waiting a while. Patience is rewarded in due season. If ships are longer on their voyage, we expect them to bring home all the richer freight. If the trees are slower than usual, this year, in putting forth their buds,—if the peach blossoms or the apricots are not visible so soon as in other seasons,—let us hope that it will be all the better for the ultimate fruit-bearing of the trees. Be thou content to come last rather than first, for sometimes last is best, and "there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last." Poor as thou art, thou shalt not always be forgotten; there is a portion in reserve for thee,—even for thee.

Thou shalt not be forgotten at the mercy-seat. Thou hast been there many times without receiving an answer to thy petitions. Perhaps, poor heavy heart, thou hast prayed seven times, and no reply has yet come. Possibly, thou hast gone to thy God as often as the poor widow went to the unjust judge, and thou hast gone as importunately as she went; but, so far, there has been no sweet relief such as thy soul longed for. Yet thou shalt not be alway forgotten; so, continue in prayer. If the promise tarry, wait for it; for, in due season, the answer shall surely come.

Thou shalt not always be forgotten in the Word. Thou hast been reading it, yet no promise has seemed to comfort thee. In fact, as thou turnest over the pages of thy Bible, thou findest bitter things recorded there, as if they were written against thyself. But read on; read on; and, one of these days, thou wilt come to a passage that will seem to leap up out of the Scriptures to meet thee. It will woo thee, the very sight of it will fascinate thee, and thou wilt say, "The Lord hath spoken this message to my soul, and I bless and praise his holy name."

Thou shalt not always be forgotten from the pulpit. Perhaps there is someone here, who has long been listening to the gospel, and who sorrowfully says, "I find that others are comforted, but I am not. God seems to give a portion to all the rest of his people, but none to poor me. Alas! I come and I go, but it seems to be all in vain. I love to go where I see others getting a blessing, yet I find no comfort there for myself." Well, thou shalt not always be forgotten; God will bid his servant drop a handful on purpose for thee. Perhaps this very text is a message to thy heart just now.

Thou shalt not always be forgotten at the Lord's table. You have gone there hoping that he, who often reveals himself to his servants in the breaking of bread, will be pleased to manifest himself to you at his own table; yet you have not had a smile from him. You have sat with others at the King's table, but the King himself did not seem to sit there with you. You ate the bread, but you did not spiritually feed upon his flesh. You drank the wine, but you did not spiritually drink his precious blood. Well, you shall not alway be forgotten. If you are really trusting in Jesus, there are brighter days yet in store for you. The King shall yet bring you into his banqueting house, and his banner over you shall be love; and you shall see such changes that you shall sing,—

> "My mourning he to dancing turns,
> For sackcloth joy he gives,
> A moment, Lord, thine anger burns,
> But long thy favour lives."

And you shall not always be forgotten in the service that you are rendering unto God. You have not yet seen a soul converted through your instrumentality, but you shall not always be forgotten in that respect. And in the sufferings that you are called to bear for Christ's sake, you shall not always be forgotten. Patience will yet have her perfect work, and the suffering will end when it has accomplished its purpose. You are persecuted and despised, perhaps, but you shall not always be forgotten; you shall yet learn the sweetness of being reproached for Christ's sake. You may seem to be forgotten for a little while, but you shall not really be so. God, the Holy Spirit, will not forget you; he will sustain, instruct, illuminate, and console you. God the Son will not forget you. He paid too high a price for you, ever to forget you. You are his bride; he loves you as he loves himself. You are part and parcel of himself, so he will never forget you. And God the Father will not forget you. You have been his from all eternity, and he has "begotten you again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." You will die soon; but you will not be forgotten, for the holy angels will convoy you home to heaven. The rich man died, and was buried, with many waving plumes over his mourning coach. His will was read, his property was squabbled over, and there was an end of him; everybody soon forgot him. But the angels carried Lazarus into Abraham's bosom. They had not forgotten Lazarus. The dogs had licked his sores, but the angels had loved him. The dunghill was his couch, but Abraham's bosom was his throne. If you are a believer in Jesus, you are not forgotten up in glory. Rowland Hill, when he was very old, used to like to go and see aged people when they were dying, and he used to say to them, "When you get to heaven, give my love to the three glorious Johns up there, and be sure to tell them that poor old Rowley hopes they have not forgotten him." There is no fear that they will forget any of you who are going there. There is a crown in heaven which will fit nobody's head but yours, and that crown must hang as a useless thing until you get there to wear it.

There is a mansion in glory that nobody but you can inhabit; and you cannot suppose that it will be allowed to stand empty for ever, can you? Oh, no; you must be there to occupy it; and you may rest assured that he who is preparing the place for his people, will bring his people to it, for he has not gone to heaven to prepare a place for his people without resolving that his people shall not perish on the way thither.

"The needy shall not alway be forgotten." They will be specially remembered when Christ comes, and he says to them, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." They will be remembered as they enter into the joy of their Lord; and then, throughout the eternal ages, they will never be forgotten of him. They may well bear whatever comes upon them now in the anticipation of the glory that is yet to be revealed.

The other promise in our text is that "*the expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever.*" What is your expectation,—you who have believed in Jesus, yet who feel very poor and needy? You have been expecting to get peace, have you not? You shall have it, in due time. A friend said to me, quite recently, "Supposing a person has believed in Jesus, but does not feel immediate peace, what then? Is that person to believe that he is saved? What is his evidence that he is?" I replied, "God says that whosoever believeth in his Son is not condemned, so I need not ask to have peace within my soul in order to corroborate the declaration of God. I am bound to take the truth of God as it stands, and believe myself to be saved, whether I feel any peace or not. If I will do this, then I shall have the peace; but if I say that I will not believe myself saved till I feel peace, then I am not really believing God at all; but I am asking him to give me peace to corroborate his evidence, as if the evidence in the Word were not strong enough to satisfy me." Dear friend, it may be that you have not yet enjoyed peace because your faith is not as simple and as clear as it should be. But if you are really poor and needy, and cast yourself on the promises of God, you may depend upon it that the expectation that you have rightly founded upon the gospel shall not be disappointed. You shall have peace; yes, and you shall have perfect peace one day. "The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your heart and mind through Christ Jesus."

You are expecting, too, that you shall triumph over sin. God has promised that sin shall not have dominion over you. It may struggle very hard, and, for a while, you may seem to be under its power; nay more, you may come under its power in a measure, but it never shall reign over you. Sin may, for a time, conquer a part of Mansoul; but it can never conquer the citadel of the heart; so rest assured of that. "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly," and you shall yet feel the power of holiness, and the mighty work of the Eternal Spirit in your soul. "The expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever."

You have been expecting, too, to get out of trouble; well, you

shall get out of trouble. You have been expecting to see good come out of evil; well, good will come out of evil. I cannot tell you when you shall be delivered, but delivered you shall be, for thus it is written, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth him out of them all." One of these days, you will receive a warrant that will set you free from all trouble for ever and ever. How soon it may come, I cannot tell; but, till it does, you may patiently wait and quietly hope for the salvation of God.

You have also been expecting to enjoy the full assurance of faith; and your expectation, in that respect, shall not perish for ever. The Lord will make your faith to grow; every day's experience will help to establish it, and even your difficulties and troubles will tend to strengthen it. If a boy is apprenticed to a blacksmith, I should not wonder if, for months, his arm aches dreadfully through swinging the big hammer; but keep on, boy, keep on! Your muscles will grow hard, your sinews will get braced, and you will become strong just where you need to be strong. So, dear friend, shall it be with your faith, you shall become strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

You expected to have very special spiritual joys, did you not? You expected that your soul would be made like the chariots of Ammi-nadib, did you not? You expected to be in such a condition that, whether in the body or out of the body, you could not tell. Well, you shall realize all that in due season, for God will reveal it unto you when it seems good in his sight. As for myself,—and I may speak also for all who love the Lord,—I am expecting to be with him where he is, to behold his glory. I am expecting to be like him, and to overcome, and sit with him upon his throne, even as he has overcome, and has sat down with his Father upon his throne. And, brothers and sisters, if this is your expectation, it shall not perish for ever, but it shall be blessedly realized. I have told you before some of the last words of my venerable grandfather, but I may venture to repeat them to you. One of my uncles said to him, "You know, father, that hymn of Dr. Watts,—

> "'Firm as the earth thy gospel stands,
> My Lord, my hope, my trust;
> If I am found in Jesus' hands,
> My soul can ne'er be lost.'"

"Ah, James!" he replied, "I do not like the metaphor that Dr. Watts uses there, 'Firm as the earth.' Why, the earth is sinking from under my feet; I want something much firmer than that. I like better what the Doctor says when he sings,—

> "'Firm as *his throne* his promise stands,
> And he can well secure
> What I've committed to his hands,
> Till the decisive hour.'"

"That will do for me now, James," said the dying saint; "that is divine sovereignty. The Lord is King; and, as surely as he is King, and sits upon his throne, so surely will he fulfil his promise to a poor feeble worm like me, so I shall behold his face with joy."

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE WIDE-OPEN MOUTH FILLED.

A Sermon

PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 14TH, 1904,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE PASTORS' COLLEGE CONFERENCE,

On Friday morning, April 7th, 1876.

"I am the LORD thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt: open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it."—Psalm lxxxi. 10.

You have, no doubt, met with various interpretations of this metaphor: "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." You will find that several expositors say that there is an allusion here to a custom which is said to have been observed by the late Shah of Persia, who, being greatly pleased with one of his courtiers, made him open his mouth, and then began to fill it with diamonds, pearls, rubies, and emeralds. I should expect that, under such circumstances, the courtier would open his mouth very widely indeed.

Well, you may use that incident as an illustration, if you like to do so; and, certainly, the spiritual blessings, which God gives to his children, are far more precious than pearls, and diamonds, and rubies, and there is every inducement for you to open your mouth to receive such treasure as he is waiting and willing to give you. But I do not feel sure that the Holy Spirit intended the psalmist to allude to any such custom as this. It is too expensive an operation to be very frequently performed, and it strikes me that even such semi-maniacs as Shahs and Sultans usually are would not be likely often to attempt such a feat as that. In default of a more suitable illustration, it might be used, but it does not appear to me to be in accordance with the chaste and natural tone of the Word of God.

Another illustration of the text may be found in a custom which is much more common in the East. At Oriental feasts, when the head of the household wishes to select the best part of the joint for an honoured guest, he usually chooses the fattest portion he can find, as the Oriental mind conceives just what we should not conceive, namely, that a mass of fat, all dripping with grease, is the most delicious morsel that can possibly be given to a guest;

so the host searches for the fattest piece of meat in the dish, takes it in his hand, and puts it deliberately into the mouth of the principal guest, bidding him open his mouth wide that he may receive it. This seems a revolting practice to us, but it was evidently the custom then, as it still is in the East. Thus we have David saying, "My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips,"—as if the lips sucked it with delight even while the fat was still upon them.

But I am inclined to look for quite another explanation of the text, though admitting that the second one is probably that upon which the psalmist was thinking when he wrote these words. One springtime, I discovered a bird's nest, in which there were a number of little birds. They were not fledged enough to fly, and their judgments were not well developed, and therefore they mistook me for their mother or father. I would not touch them, but I held my fingers over them, and they opened their mouths wide,—nay, the little creatures seemed to me as if they were all mouth. I could not see any other part of their bodies; all seemed lost in one great vacuum. If you have ever seen the mother-bird come to the nest with a worm in its mouth, you have noticed that, in an instant, all her little ones are up, and eager to swallow that worm. She can only fill the mouth of one, and she can scarcely do that; for, no sooner has it swallowed what she gives it than it begins to gape again; so the parent-birds have to keep flying very fast, all day long, collecting food for their family; but, however many times they come, they never have to use the exhortation of our text. The little birds in their nests are far more sensible than we are. When God hovers over us with his wide-spread wings, and covers us with his warm feathers, he has need to say to each one of us, "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it;" but the little birds take good care, without any teaching, to open their mouths wide, that their mothers may fill them. This illustration may occur again during the sermon; for, whether it is the one to which the psalmist alludes, or not, it is a very useful one, and is full of instruction. It also has the further advantage that it does not appertain to either the East or the West alone; and, as this blessed Book is neither for East nor West alone, but for both, I like to find an illustration which, in all time, and in every clime, may open up the meaning of the Word. "Open thy mouth," then, as a bird opens its mouth when the mother-bird returns with its food, and he who, in the infinitude of his condescension, likens himself to birds, says, "I will fill it."

Let us imitate the inspired teachers in using things in nature to illustrate the meaning of the messages they have to deliver. Look from our Lord Jesus Christ, the Prince of preachers, through the long line of prophets, to evangelists, and apostles, and you will see that they did not utter the truth with their eyes closed; but, with large sympathy, they looked abroad upon the whole range of creation, both animate and inanimate, and yoked every creature to the chariot of truth, if, by any means, through the use of simile, and

metaphor, and illustration, they might enable the divine message to ride triumphantly into the hearts of the people.

If any of us are to succeed in teaching, either few or many, we must imitate these masters of the art. God has given the preacher eyes as well as a tongue;—ay, two eyes to one tongue;—and he must take care to observe all that can be seen, and to make abundant use of his observation; otherwise, he will find his speech prove to be, as Shakespeare says, "stale, flat, and unprofitable." The true teacher should not seek to soar on the gaudy wings of brilliant oratory, pouring forth sonorous polished sentences in rhythmic harmony; but should endeavour to speak pointed truths,—things that will strike and stick,—thoughts that will be remembered and recalled, again and again, when the hearer is far away from the place of worship where he listened to the preacher's words.

The text naturally divides itself into three parts. First, there is *the exhortation:* "Open thy mouth wide." Secondly, there is *the promise:* "I will fill it;" and, thirdly, there is *the encouragement* contained in the name by which God speaks of himself: "I am Jehovah thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt."

I. First, then, brethren, here is THE EXHORTATION: "Open thy mouth wide."

What does that expression mean? Well, I should have to open my mouth very wide indeed if I were to explain all it means. You probably will know, by putting it in practice, better than by any explanation that I can give you; but, certainly, first of all, I should say that it means that *there should be a great sense of your need.* The wide-open mouth means that you hunger. The little birds need no instruction in opening their mouths except the inward monitor. They feel a lack of food; they are growing, and growing fast, and feathers have to be made, and they need much food, and those strong needs of theirs make them open their mouths by instinct, as we say. Brethren, if we had more sense of our need, prayer would be more of an instinct with us; we should pray because we could not help praying; we should pray, perhaps, less methodically, but we should pray, probably, more truly, if we prayed because there were groanings within us, caused by intense pain, and moanings that came out of inward agony, and longings that came out of the consciousness of our dire necessities. Surely, this kind of opening of the mouth, by the sense of our need, ought to be easy to us, for our needs are very great. I must not say that they are infinite, for we are only finite beings; but they are so vast that only infinity can ever supply them. What is there that you do not need, my brother? Someone said in prayer, the other day, that we were "a bag of wants." That was a very accurate description. Are we all conscious of our many needs?

Dear brother, are you growing conscious of your own power? If so, pray against it with all your might. A much better thing is to become conscious of your own weakness. You will not open your mouth wide if you do not realize how weak you are. If you feel that you are strong, you will cease to cry to God for strength. Are you getting proud of your experience of divine things? Strive to

hurl that pride down, for you will be no wiser than a wild ass's colt if you rely on your own experience. Do you feel that you have now attained to a very high degree of grace? You have certainly not attained it if you think you have. If you are still conscious of your own shortcomings, you are probably far ahead of your own belief; but if you are conscious of your attainments, you are far behind those attainments; rest assured of that. I do solemnly believe, brethren, that it is as good a test of a man's spiritual riches as can be found, namely, his own sense of his spiritual poverty. Oh, get less and less in your own esteem; grow poorer and poorer, weaker and yet weaker still; become, in yourselves, nothing, and less than nothing. This is a grand way of opening the mouth; because our needs, when they are truly felt, are really prayers, for prayers are merely the expression of the wants of our heart; and if, to the consciousness of our need, there is added the knowledge that God can supply that need, we have, at any rate, the basis of all true prayer. Oh, for a great sense of our spiritual poverty! Oh, for an awful vacuum within the soul, a consciousness most truly felt, that there is room for God! Oh, for a deep chasm to yawn within one's nature, which only Christ himself can fill!

The next way of opening the mouth will be *to increase the vehemence of desire.* How did the psalmist do this? He says, "I opened my mouth, and panted." This is what we need to do, to get such vehement desires after good things that we cannot take a negative answer to our petitions. We know that what we ask is for God's glory and our own good; and, therefore, we are not going to ask as men who may be put off, but our resolve is like that of Jacob at Jabbok,—

> "With thee all night I mean to stay,
> And wrestle till the break of day."

We cry, with good John Newton,—

> "No,—I must maintain my hold,
> 'Tis thy goodness makes me bold;
> I can no denial take,
> When I plead for Jesus' sake."

Those prayers speed best that are fullest of holy vehemence. There is a naughty kind of vehemence which we must get rid of. I am not sure that all the expressions we sometimes hear in prayer are right; there is no need for us to seem to fight with God at the mercy-seat. I feel, sometimes, a sort of shivering when I hear brethren make a great noise in prayer without any evidence of corresponding earnestness deep down in their soul. Yet I know that our Lord Jesus said, "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." If you want to have great things of God, you must want them terribly; you must get to want them more and more, your sense of want must keep on growing. You know also that our Lord Jesus said, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst"—hunger is bad enough, and thirst

is awful, but hunger and thirst combined bring a man to the verge of death;—yet Jesus says, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for"—Christ's promise is parallel to the text before us,—"they shall be filled." Get that blessed hunger and thirst, brethren. When you cannot live without conversions, you shall have conversions; when you *must* have them, you shall have them. May the Lord drive that "must" into us all! May he urge us on, with a passionate desire, to resolve that we will know the reason why if souls are not converted to God.

Another way of opening the mouth is *to ask for greater capacity*. If you have ever fed a lot of little birds—no doubt my friend, Archibald Brown, has often done it,—with pieces of egg, if you have some very small pieces, you drop them into the smaller mouths; but if you have a large piece of egg, where does it go? Into the biggest mouth you can find. You seem to feel, "That little bird must not have a large piece, because he has only a tiny mouth; but here is one, whose mouth yawns like the crater of a small volcano." So you drop into his mouth a larger piece; and I have no doubt the mother-birds exercise a good deal of discretion in feeding their young. They do not give the large worms to the little birds, but they drop the large ones into the large mouths; and, in like manner, if we get large capacities, we shall receive large blessings. What a wonderful difference there is in the capacity of different individuals! I have heard it said that a sinner sucks in happiness, such as it is, with the mouth of an insect, but that a believer drinks in bliss with the mouth of an angel; and it is so. The stream of mercy seems to run right over some men because there is no place for it to run in; it runs into others in driblets because there is only a little hole into which it can drip; but when the mouth is opened wide to receive the blessing of the Lord, how capacious it is! I should like, spiritually, to have my mouth like that of Behemoth, of which the Lord said to Job, "he trusteth that he can draw up Jordan into his mouth." Oh, for a mouth of such mighty capacity as to be capable of receiving a far greater blessing than we have ever yet received!

Dear brethren, we are not straitened in God; if we are straitened at all, it is in ourselves. No wise man will try to put a gallon of any liquid into a quart pot. You cannot expect to put a bushel of anything into a peck measure. "Be ye therefore enlarged," is still the message we need to hear; and one part of that enlargement must consist in the enlargement of the mouth in prayer and in holy vehemence. God grant to all of us far greater capacity! What little men we all are! We sometimes call one another great, and perhaps fancy that we are. I wonder what our Heavenly Father thinks of us. We see our little children, one of them three years old, and another only two, and another only a month or two; they think the baby is a very little thing, and that they themselves are ever so big, and they talk of their big brother, who is only four or five years old! It is very much like that with us; there is not much more difference between the greatest and the least of us than between those children. So, if we can, we must grow,—grow at the

mouth, and grow all over. We need to have greater grace given to us; but the Lord will not give us great blessings until we are able to bear them. You remember how he said to his disciples, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now;" and he might say to us, "I have yet many things to give unto you, but ye cannot bear them at present." If God were now to give to any man all the blessings that he means to bestow upon him in a few years' time, it would ruin him. When God has given us any success, it is a great addition to the mercy if he has first fitted us to bear it. Some of us can recollect brethren, taken almost straight from the miners' pit, and elevated suddenly into a position of great popularity, with no training for the ministry, and no persecution, no criticism from the public press, and no unkind remarks from Christian men; and we remember with sorrow how they failed. So, if you, while you are young men, have to run the gauntlet of a good deal of trial, and difficulty, and opposition, and non-success, you ought to thank God for it. You are now being made ready to receive the blessing for which you were not fit before. The Lord is increasing your capacity; and when the capacity is sufficient, he will fill it.

Next, dear brethren, I feel that the text must mean, *seek for greater blessings than any that you have yet received.* You have opened your mouth, and you have received something; possibly, you think that you have received a great deal; but the Lord "is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." I have heard people say in prayer, "Thou art able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we *can* ask or think." Well, I suppose that is true, but that is not what Paul was inspired to write. We can ask and can think a great deal; but Paul says that God is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we actually do ask or think. Well, then, as this is the case, will we not ask for greater things than we have ever asked for before? It is a singular fact that the certainty of obtaining is in proportion to the largeness of what you ask. Some men go to God, and ask only for temporal favours; and, possibly, they do not obtain them. He who would be content with this world will probably never get it; but he who craves spiritual good may ask with the absolute certainty of receiving it. Christ's promise is, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." If you ask only for temporal mercies, and can be satisfied with them, you may get what you ask. There are gushing springs from which you might drink if you would, but the muddy waters of Sihor are evidently good enough for you. But if you ask the Lord for spiritual blessings, he is sure to give them to you. It is more natural for God to give great things than little things; they are more in his line,—more in his way. You know that certain men have certain ways. There are men whom you can get to do anything if it is in their way, but they will not act in another way. Well, now, the Lord's ways are as high above our ways as the heavens are above the earth; yet David knew what God's ways were, for he said, "Then will I teach transgressors thy ways." One

of the ways of God is to do great things for his people. Some of them sang, "The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad." So you are more sure of getting blessings from God if you ask him for great things; therefore, be sure to ask for very great things. When you do get to the mercy-seat, do not begin asking for littles, and go home with trifles; but ask for as big things as ever your soul can desire, and as big things as the promises of God cover. There you have a task before you that will tax your greatest powers, but give your heart and soul to it, and you will find it to be a very pleasant and profitable one.

Ask great things for yourselves, brethren. Ask to know all the truth of God; ask to know the fulness of God; ask to know the riches of his grace; ask to know "the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge;" and when you have asked for all that, ask for holiness, and do not ask for anything less than perfect holiness. Continue to open your mouth wide, that every grace may be given to you; adding "to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness love;" and do not rest satisfied until you have all these Christian virtues. You may ask also for joy; and, oh, what an ocean of bliss is before you in the joy of the Lord! In "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding," what a wondrous depth of joy there is laid up in store for you! Our Lord Jesus said to his disciples, "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." It may be the same with you; therefore, ask for great things. Do not be satisfied with being little Christians, seek to come to the full stature of men in Christ Jesus. I will be thankful to get just inside the gate of heaven; but if I can sing more sweetly, and if I can have more fellowship with Christ, nearer his throne, why should I not get there? God grant that we may all have that high privilege!

Once more, I think that this exhortation, "Open thy mouth wide," means *attempt great things for God* as well as ask great things from God. Brethren, go in for something great. Go in for saving one soul; that is something great. Go in for preaching the whole truth of God; that is something great. Go in to be faithful to the teaching of the whole Word of God; that is something great. It is not sufficient if you have filled your own place;—a good many of you have not done that yet;—go in to preach the gospel somewhere else as well. Open some other building for worship; penetrate into some region where the gospel is not yet known. I wish that our College would open its mouth so wide as to include the whole world in the sphere of its operations. Brother Wigstone tells us that, if we open our mouth wide, we shall swallow up the whole of Spain and Portugal. Other brethren want us to open our mouth wide enough to absorb France, and Germany, and Russia, and all Europe. Some of our brethren have gone to India; there is a mouthful for us. If we open our mouth wide, India may be evangelized, and China, and the new world of America,

and the far-distant world of Australia, will feel the power of the gospel that we take there in the name of the Lord. Let us pray, as David did, long ago, that the whole earth may be filled with God's glory. What is the whole earth, after all, compared with the greatness of God, and with the infinite sacrifice that Christ has offered? Well may the Lord say to each one of us, "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it."

I do like big prayers, brethren. I have some regard for the memory of William Huntington, though I should be sorry to endorse all that he said and did. He was a man whose prayers God heard and answered, but what were his prayers often? I smile, sometimes, as I think of what he asked of God: "Lord, give me a new pair of leather breeches;" or, "Give me a horse and carriage;" and he got them. William Carey cried, "India for Christ," and his prayer has kept on ringing right down the ages, and the Church of God is still praying, "India for Christ," and that prayer will be heard and answered in God's good time. Little boats, that carry small cargoes, come quickly home; but the big ships, that do business in great waters, are much longer in reaching the home port; but, then, they bring back much more precious loads. Huntington's prayer was the little boat that proved God's faithfulness; but Carey's prayer was the big ship, which will come home as surely as the other one did. So, "open thy mouth wide," brother, and ask something that will be honouring to God to give.

Did you ever think, dear friends, how wonderful is the condescension of God in hearkening to the voice of a man? That he should hear our prayers at all, shows that, in his condescension, he is as infinite as he is in his glory. Do you know, in your own soul, that God has ever heard your prayers? Then bless him, and love him, all your days. You know how the writer of the 116th Psalm put the matter: "I love the Lord, because he hath heard my voice and my supplications. Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live." It is truly marvellous that, though our prayer is so full of faultiness, and has to do with such insignificant worms as we are, yet that the Lord hears us, and grants our requests.

There are some who talk as if prayer was a meaningless form to us. "It is a beneficial thing, no doubt, for you to pray," say they. Surely, sirs, you must be measuring our corn with your bushel if you imagine that we could do such an idiotic thing as pray to a god who cannot hear us. That is an employment only fit for imbeciles; and if you tell us that no doubt it is a good thing for us to do, we reply that it would probably be a good thing for you to do it, for it could only be suitable to the imbecility which originated the charge brought against us. We assert, and rejoice to assert that, without working miracles, God still accomplishes his eternal purposes in answer to the supplications of his people. In earlier days, he wrought miracles for the deliverance of his servants; but, to-day, he does the same thing without the miraculous process, and as manifestly grants the requests of his suppliants as if miracles were as plentiful as the leaves upon the trees in summer.

II. Now, secondly, we turn to THE PROMISE: "I will fill it."

Great asking seems to me to be on a scale proportionate to the great things that are according to the very nature of God. I have never been able to believe in a little hell because I cannot find, in the Bible, any trace of a little heaven, or of a little Saviour, or of a little sin, or of a little God. I believe in a theology that is drawn to scale. If it is on the scale of an inch all round, I can receive it; but if it is on the scale of a foot in one place, I think it should be on the same scale throughout. Look, brethren, at the brightness of the Shekinah glory shining above the mercy-seat, and that mercy-seat red with such blood as was never spilt but once, and the Eternal Spirit leading us up to that mercy-seat;—can we go there to ask for a mere trifle? That does not seem to me to be at all congruous; far more congruous does it seem that, before the great God, with the great Mediator, and the great Spirit helping our infirmities, we should open our mouth wide, and expect God to fill it. O brethren, we may be quite sure that, in dealing with the infinite Jehovah, if we can rise to his scale of things, he will fill our mouths when we open them. It is hard work to fill a hungry mouth, for the food disappears down the throat in a moment; when once fed, it opens again, and is as empty as it was before. But God has the way of filling mouths that makes them keep full. He gives us water to drink, of so wondrous a kind, that we do not thirst again. Jesus said to the woman of Samaria, "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." And God says to each child of his, "'Open thy mouth wide,' and though it seems to be like a horse-leech crying, 'Give, give,' 'I will fill it;' though it seems as insatiable as the grave, 'I will fill it.'" The great God himself says it; and, therefore, it must be true. If he had not said it, I would not have believed it; but having said it, he can do what seems to us impossible; he can satisfy our most insatiable cravings and longings; and he bids us keep on longing and craving, that he may keep on satisfying us again and again.

This promise is given by One who knows what we are going to ask. The Lord says, "Open thy mouth wide," and he knows what we desire to receive from him, and he has it all ready to give to us. Did you never bring home a present for your children, and ask them to wish for something, although they did not know that, all the while, it was in your pocket? You have brought them up to the point of asking for something that they want; then they go to bed, and when they wake in the morning, they are surprised to see the very thing they longed for lying on their pillow. In a similar manner, our Heavenly Father gives additional sweetness to his mercies by tempting us to long for various things that he has all ready to give to us. He may well say, "Open thy mouth wide," when he has so many good things ready to fill it.

What will he fill our mouths with? *Sometimes, he will fill them with prayer.* Do you not find, at times, that you cannot pray? Never mind, brother, if it is so with you; open your mouth wide,

for he will fill it. He will fill your mouth with arguments. Kneel down, and groan because you cannot pray, agonize because you cannot pray, and the next day you will say, "I wish I felt as I did yesterday, for I never prayed with greater power than when I thought I was not praying at all." Open your mouth with a sense of want, a sense of desire. Open your mouth with the sensibility of insensibility; you can comprehend, by experience, the paradox that I cannot explain. God knows how to fill your mouth with prayer when you go to your pulpit. Perhaps, before the time for the service came, you thought you could not pray or preach at all. You remember how the Lord said to Ezekiel, "Eat this roll, and go speak unto the house of Israel;" and the prophet says, "So I opened my mouth, and he caused me to eat that roll." You also may be able to do the same thing. Sitting in your study, you may be anxious because you cannot get a subject to really lay hold of you. At any rate, brother, open your mouth with desire, and eagerness, and longing, as you sit there; and if the Lord sends a roll to you, and shows you how to eat it, when you go to talk to your people, you shall get that promise to Ezekiel fulfilled in your own experience, "I will open thy mouth, and thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God." When you open your mouth in private, and eat the roll that the Lord gives you, he will open your mouth in public, and you shall tell the people the truth upon which you have privately feasted.

Next, *the Lord will fill our mouths with all manner of spiritual blessings.* David says that the Lord "satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's." Time fails me to attempt any list of proof texts upon this point; I can only say that, when the Lord opens your mouth, you may be quite certain that anything he puts into it is wholesome and good; even though, sometimes, it is not according to your own taste, though it will be if your spiritual palate is in a healthy condition. If your taste is out of order, even sweet things will seem bitter to you. If your heart is not right with God, you will ask for that which would injure you if he granted your request. When the Israelites craved for flesh in the wilderness, they made a terrible mistake. It will be far wiser for you, when you open your mouth in prayer, not so much to go into details as to say, "Lord, I am a mass of wants; I hardly know what they really are, and what I think I want may be a mistake, but my mouth is open to receive whatever thou seest to be best for me." Then you may expect that he will fill it with all sorts of good things.

Further, *the Lord will fill your mouth with sacred joy.* When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, his people said, "Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing." It is a blessed mouthful when you get such an amazing mercy that you cannot understand it. Have you not, sometimes, received a mercy that has been like Isaac, the child of laughter? It has come to us as Isaac came to Abraham, and we have heard the sound of the mercy, and have laughed for very joy. God will also fill your mouth with his praise. That was a wise prayer of the

psalmist, "Let my mouth be filled with thy praise and with thy honour all the day." What a blessed mouthful it would be to have your mouth so full of the praise of God that you could not help letting it run out!

III. Now I must close by noticing THE ENCOURAGEMENT. "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." Why? "Because I am Jehovah, thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt."

Brother, *it is Jehovah who says to thee*, "*Open thy mouth wide.*" It does not do always to open your mouth wide to man, but the Lord says to you, "I am Jehovah, your God; open your mouth wide, and I will fill it." When you stand before men, ask little, and expect less; but when you stand before God, ask much, and expect more, and believe that he is able to do for you exceeding abundantly above all that you ask or think. "I am Jehovah." That is a boundless name; we know that our askings can never exceed his benevolence or his might. We are asking of a King; yea, of him who is King of kings, so let us open our mouths wide as we approach him; his very name prompts us so to do. Then he adds, "I am Jehovah, thy God;" so, will you not ask great things of the One who has given himself to you? Is God himself yours? Then, what is there that you may not ask of him? There is great force in Paul's argument, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" There is equal force in this other argument,—As he spared not his own Deity, but freely gave himself up to be the God of his chosen ones, saying, "I will be their God, and they shall be my people," then he will not deny them anything that they ask of him if it is really for their good. Indeed, all things are yours already; since he is your God, you have only to ask him to give you that which is your own by his own gracious covenant. I should not feel afraid or ashamed to ask anyone to give me what really belonged to me, however big it was; and, in prayer, you have to ask from God what he has already given you in Christ Jesus, for "all things are yours," because "ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's."

Then he adds, "*which brought thee out of the land of Egypt.*" Notice this argument, brethren. Our own experience of deliverance from sin is a wonderful reason for asking great things of God. I speak with the utmost reverence, but it seems to me that God himself cannot give me anything more than he has already given me in the unspeakable gift of his only-begotten and well-beloved Son. His blessed Spirit has given unto us eternal life. All the embellishments and enrichments and sustenances of that life are not equal to the life itself; the life of God in the soul is the chief blessing, and that we have already received. Well, then, as God has given us life, surely he will give us all other great blessings that we need, and will deny us nothing that is for his own glory and our present and future good. Paul often uses this kind of argument; for instance, "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies,

we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." The greater mercy having come, the lesser one will also surely come. So, ask God for large things; for you have already received larger things than you are ever likely to ask for, so you may rest assured that you will receive, in the future, whatever God sees that you really need.

God said to his ancient people, "I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt." Might they not well ask large things of that God who smote Pharaoh with all those terrible plagues? Might they not well ask great things of him who darkened the sun at midday, who brought up the locusts till they covered the land, who made the very dust of Egypt to crawl with noxious life, and who sent terrific hailstorms, with fire mingled with the hail? Who would not ask great things of such a great God as that? Then think of his slaying the firstborn of Egypt, and dividing the sea, even the Red sea, and leading all the hosts of Israel through the deep and through the wilderness. He that could do all that could, in his infinite might, do all else that his people needed, so they might well ask great things at his hand. Moses sang, on the borders of the Red sea, "He is my God, and I will prepare him a habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him." The Israelites might well ask great things of him who had overthrown all their adversaries; and you, who have experienced such a marvellous deliverance by the blood of Jesus Christ, ought surely to be bold when you go to the mercy-seat. The deliverance of Israel out of Egypt was by blood. The paschal lamb was slain, and its blood was sprinkled upon the houses of the Israelites; but you have not been redeemed with the blood of earthly lambs, "but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." Can it be possible, after such a redemption, that anything that is needed to bring you into the promised land, and to enrich you with all temporal and spiritual blessings, should ever be withheld from you? Let us each one go to the mercy-seat with our mouths wide open, and then let us go to our pulpits, and preach with our mouths wide open, even as Paul wrote, "O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged." Your mouths may well be open to your hearers because they have first been opened unto God. I am thankful that, throughout this Conference, I have seen no traces of doubt, and no signs of despondency. Every brother has seemed to have confidence in God, and to have hope, like a bright light, guiding him on his way. I have no doubt that some of you will see "greater things than these" even here on earth, while others will see them from the heights of heaven. As surely as we have the gospel with us, and the Holy Ghost with us, as surely as God has led us thus far through the wilderness, as surely as he keeps us knit together in love and unity, so surely will he lead us from strength to strength, and the Lord will be magnified in our mortal bodies whether by life or by death, and we shall, by his grace, all appear before him in Zion. God bless you, brethren! Amen.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

NEW TOKENS OF ANCIENT LOVE.

A Sermon

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DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On a Lord's-day Evening, during the winter of 1861—2.

"The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee."—Jer. xxxi. 3.

IT is said that, when the stars cannot be seen, during the day, from the ordinary level of the earth, if one should go down into a deep well, they would be visible at once; and, certainly, it is a fact that many of the brightest of God's promises are usually seen by his children when they are passing through some of their darkest experiences. As surely as God puts them into the furnace of affliction and trial, he will be with them in the furnace. I do not read that Jacob ever saw the angel of the Lord until that night when, by the brook Jabbok, "there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day;" but, then, the wrestling Jacob met the wrestling angel foot to foot. I do not know that Joshua ever saw the "Captain of the Lord's host" until, outside the walls of Jericho, his Divine Leader appeared unto him. I do not know that Abraham ever saw the Lord until, as a stranger in the plains of Mamre, he manifested himself to his servant in the form of a traveller and his friends needing hospitality and refreshment. It is in our most desperate straits that we often have our most joyous revelations. John must go to "the isle that is called Patmos" before he could have the wondrous Revelation that was there given to him; it was only on that barren, storm-girt rock, shut out from the world's light, that he could find the fitting darkness in which to view the glory of heaven undistracted by the shadows of earth. The message of our text was given to Jeremiah in a time of deep distress; it was meant to be helpful to the Lord's people in their greatest desolations. That being the case, we may use it in a threefold manner; and view it, first, as *an answer to many complaints;* secondly, as *teaching some exceedingly valuable doctrines;* and, thirdly, as *a stimulant to self-examination as to our state before God.*

I. First, then, our text may be viewed as AN ANSWER TO MANY COMPLAINTS.

If you look at your Bibles, you will see that the word "saying" is in italics, showing that it is not in the original, and has been supplied by the translators. Sometimes, they have inserted words which have really brought out the meaning more clearly; but, in this case, if I understand the passage, they have rather obscured the sense. The fact is, the first sentence is a complaint on the part of Israel. In the previous verse, God had said, "The people which were left of the sword found grace in the wilderness; even Israel, when I went to cause him to rest." "Ah!" said Israel, "but that was centuries ago; 'the Lord hath appeared of old unto me.'" There was a note of complaint even in the expression of gratitude, as much as to say, "Times are changed, for the Lord does not appear unto me now." The complaint was, that his choice revelations and wondrous deliverances were all in the ages long ago; but the Lord's answer was, in effect, "It is true that these revelations and deliverances were in the past, but they are designed to yield you present comfort, for they prove that I have loved you with an ancient love; and, since I am immutable, you may omit the word ancient, and insert everlasting: 'Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love.'" Then, to complete the answer, the Lord avers that, even in Israel's present time of mourning, he had manifested his lovingkindness. He seems to say, "Is not that as much as ever I did? Talk of all the wonders that I wrought in the days gone by, when I cut Rahab in pieces, and wounded the dragon;—this is a still greater wonder, that I have drawn thee with lovingkindness. Say not that the former times were better than these; say not that the wonder-working power of God is exhausted. I loved thee of old, but I also love thee to-day; and I have proved it by drawing thee with the bands of my love. This is as great a miracle, as high a privilege, and as sure a sign of my love to you as anything I did in the olden days."

Now, brothers and sisters, is not this our complaint, sometimes, that we read in the Bible of what God did of old, but we see nothing like that nowadays? Indeed, some people think that, although there were wonders in those ancient times, the oracle has long ceased to speak. I daresay you have heard of the poor ignorant woman, who, on being told by her minister about the crucifixion of Christ, said, "Well, well, sir, if it was so, it happened a long while ago, and a great way off; but let us hope the story is not true." I address some people, not quite so ignorant as that woman, who, nevertheless, when I preach about the wonders God hath wrought, say, "Well, sir, those things happened long ago, and a great way off; but it is not at all probable that God would do anything like that now." What! do you think that his arm is waxed short, or that his hand has become powerless, so that he is not now able to help his people as he did in the ages gone by? This is the complaint of many; perhaps they do not put it into words, but this is what they often say in their heart.

What is God's answer to this complaint? Let each believer hear him say, "I have done for thee as great wonders as ever I did for Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob. I have wrought for thee miracles as

matchless as when I brought Israel up out of Egypt, or led the chosen nation through the wilderness into the land of Canaan. Did I bring them up out of Egypt? Have I not brought thee up out of the dominion of sin? Did I break the power of Pharaoh? Have I not crushed the might of Satan? Did I divide the Red sea for Israel to pass over? Have I not made a pathway for thee, through many a tumultuous sea, so that thou hast gone over dryshod? Did I feed the people with manna in the wilderness, and have I not fed thee,—not with bread alone, but also with the words which have come forth out of my mouth? Did I cause Moses to lift up the brazen serpent, that they might be healed when they were bitten by the serpents; and have I not lifted up the Son of man, that whosoever looketh unto him may be cured of the serpent-bite of sin? Did I bring them into Canaan, and give them rest; and have I not said to thee, 'There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God'? Did I drive out the Canaanite before them, and give them possession of the land; and have I not driven out thy sins, and will I not, by my Spirit, purify and cleanse thy whole life? Did I give them prophets after my own heart, and have I not given thee shepherds who have fed thee with knowledge and with understanding? Did I give to them, at last, King David to sit upon his throne; and have I not given to thee great David's greater Son and Lord, to be the King of thy heart, and to rule over thine entire being? Did I give them Solomon, and a temple, and riches and glory; and have I not promised to thee heaven, and greater riches, and glories, and splendours than anything I ever gave to him when he ruled over Israel?"

I feel sure that, if you will look into it carefully, your own experience will prove to be far more wonderful than anything which God did of old, so that you will have no reason to say, "The Lord appeared of old unto our fathers, but he is not now with their children." We are apt, sometimes, to think that natural miracles are greater than spiritual ones; for instance, that the dividing of the Red sea, as recorded in the Book of Exodus, is a greater miracle than the forgiving of sins, as recorded in the Gospels; but, if you will weigh these two things in the balances of the sanctuary, you will at once see that the spiritual miracle is infinitely greater than the natural one. It is an easy thing to shut the mouths of ordinary lions; but it is a great deal more difficult to shut the mouth of the roaring lion of hell, who goeth about seeking whom he may devour. It is a very simple matter for the omnipotent God to make a world; —he speaks, and it is done;—but to remake an innumerable company of his creatures, who have become debased, and spiritually dead,—this is, indeed, a work only comparable to that which he accomplished when he "brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant." God made the world without any suffering, but he could not redeem even one soul without agonies unknown. At the close of the six days' work of creation, God could say, of everything that he had made, that it was very good; but, on the cross, the Saviour could not say, "It is finished," until his very

heart had been broken with anguish and reproach. God could rejoice over the works of his hands, and his delights could be with the sons of men; but, after man had fallen, God could not lift him up again without sighs, and groans, and bloody sweat,—yea, death itself, the death of deaths, "the death of the cross."

Therefore, let none of us, in these days, say that the former times were better than the present ones, or that God has ceased to perform his mighty works. He has done as much for us as he ever did for our fathers; so let us praise and bless his holy name, and laud and magnify his deeds of grace. We, as a church, perhaps, are apt to think that we must not expect great things from God in these times. Why not,—I pray,—why not? Did not God give tongues of fire, and send his apostles forth to preach the Word to the people of every clime under heaven; and is it not a fact that, within a hundred years of Christ's death, his gospel had been proclaimed through all the then known world? And is it not possible that, from this time forth, the Church of Christ may take great strides like a giant, instead of creeping like a snail? Why may not the army of the cross march onward,—

"From victory unto victory,"—

instead of being so frequently repulsed? Is the Church of Christ always to be like a little stream, in which you may see the pebbles lie? No; let her be like Kishon, the mighty torrent that swept away the hosts of Sisera and Jabin, and let her carry off the legions of darkness into the depths of despair. Let God but arise in his might, and wondrous works, such as he did in the days of Huss, and Luther, and Calvin, shall be done again. The thunder-claps of Whitefield and Wesley shall reverberate again. God can make all his ministers to be flames of fire if so he pleases. He can once more arouse his Church, scatter all her foes before her, and enrich her with the spoils of the holy war. We have not fallen upon evil days, beloved. *We* may be feeble, but our God is not. The light may be dim just now, but the sun is not dim. What if the winds do not always blow with hurricane force? They are but slumbering for a while, and will awake with all their wonted vigour, and drive the chariots of the sky at resistless speed. What if the ocean should seem, just now, to be sleeping in its briny bed? Before long, it will respond to the psalmist's invitation, "Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof." If the stars should be, for a little while, hidden from your gaze; they will soon pierce through the darkness; and, once again, shall ye behold those eyes of heaven peering down in mercy upon you. God can speedily renew to you all the manifestations of his presence. Ebbs shall be followed by floods, winters by summers, and our present indications of a state of death shall give place to signs and tokens of a glorious life. Say not, complainingly, O Church of God, "The Lord hath appeared of old unto me;" but rather rejoice and revel in his comforting assurance, "Yea, I did appear of old unto thee; for 'I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.'"

I have thus explained how I believe our text was intended to be used.

II. Now we will look at it as TEACHING SOME EXCEEDINGLY VALUABLE DOCTRINES.

And, first, I believe that it teaches us *the doctrine of effectual calling:* "With lovingkindness have I drawn thee." No one ever does come to the Lord unless the Lord himself draws him; he cannot come, and he will not come. Christ said to the murmuring Jews, "No man *can* come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him," and to those who sought to kill him, because of his miracles on the Sabbath-day, he said, "Ye *will* not come to me, that ye might have life." That is the sternest blow against free-will of which I know; what a free-willer can make out of that text, I cannot tell. He says that any man can come to Christ, yet Christ said to some, "Ye will not come to me;" and both observation and experience prove that this is still true. Never yet did a soul come to Christ till first Christ came to it. There are some, who think that the doctrine of effectual calling means that God forces men to repent and believe against their wills;—a more absurd and unscriptural notion than that, could hardly be mentioned. God does not drag men to heaven by the hair of their heads. There is a wide difference between physical force and spiritual force. God does not save an unwilling man, but he makes him willing in the day of his power.

We may not be able to explain all about this great mystery; yet we may firmly believe—in full accordance with the laws which regulate human minds, and without at all violating the free agency of his creatures,—that God knows how to persuade men, ay, and how sweetly to "compel them to come in," that his house may be filled. There is a sort of compulsion, you know, which one exercises by argument. The force of logic, or the spell of eloquence, we all acknowledge. In this way, the understanding is overwhelmed. The mind at first resists, and says, "I will not do so-and-so;" but you bring argument after argument to bear upon it until, at last, it yields, and says, "I am compelled to do it;" yet it acts willingly, freely, and not without pleasure. The understanding has been enlightened, that acts upon the rest of the powers of the mind, and thus the man is influenced, we may even say compelled, without any violation of the fact that he is free. So, the Holy Spirit enlightens the understanding, by bringing the truth to the mind; and, through that truth, leads the soul to see certain consequences that follow from it; then, the understanding being enlightened, the soul, with full consent, comes to Christ. The Holy Spirit does what you and I cannot do; for he acts directly upon the will. We cannot do that except by physical force; and, even then, the will is not really changed; for, if a man resolves that he will not do a certain thing, but you afterwards compel him to do it, I question if his will is actually conquered. But the Holy Spirit knows how to apprehend my Lord Will-be-will,—as Bunyan calls him,—put him in irons, and lead him away captive. There is still the will, but I can hardly say that it is put into fetters, for it was in fetters before; but it is so changed and assimilated to the will of God, that it is really free in its love of holiness. It seemed to be free before, but it was a slave to evil passions. Free-will is a slave, by nature; but when

Christ comes, and (as some would say,) fetters it with the golden chains of love, then the will becomes free indeed.

Thus I have shown you how the Holy Spirit acts upon the will; and he can also act upon the heart, which is, perhaps, an even more important part of the man. When a man truly loves any object, he is always willing to do anything in furtherance of that object; and so, when the Holy Spirit shows to the mind's eye the beauties of Christ, his sufficiency, and adaptation to the needs of the soul, the heart begins to love Christ. Where the heart goes, the will must follow; especially if it be led by "My Lord Understanding, the Lord Mayor of Mansoul," according to Bunyan's "Holy War." So, though no soul ever comes to Christ without being drawn to him, yet let it always be understood that such drawing is in perfect accordance with the laws which govern human minds, and that the Spirit of God thus acts without, in the least degree, violating the freedom which God has given to men.

The text says that God draws his people "with lovingkindness." Yet it is quite certain that the Holy Spirit makes use of the law of the Lord in drawing men to Christ and salvation. The thunders of the law, the terrors of judgment, the stings of conscience, and the pangs of death are all employed for this purpose; but they are all tempered and softened by the lovingkindness of the Lord. In every instance, you will find that it is his lovingkindness that gives the finishing stroke, even with those who are driven to Christ by that stern pedagogue, the law. The prodigal set out for his father's house from a sense of need; "but when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him;" so that the last steps he took, towards his father's house, were taken with those kisses still warm upon his cheek, and his father's welcome still musical in his ears. Rightly do we sing,—

> "Law and terrors do but harden
> All the while they work alone;
> But a sense of blood-bought pardon
> Soon dissolves a heart of stone."

And when that sense of blood-bought pardon comes to the heart, the law's thunders are all hushed, and the heart is won for God. The Master came one night, to the door of a man's heart, and knocked on it with the mailed gloves of the law upon his hands; the door creaked and shook, but it did not open, and the man put up against it all the furniture he could find, to keep it from opening, crying, all the while, "I will never be forced to yield." So the Master turned away, for a time; but, by-and-by, he came back, and, with his own soft hand, using most that part where the nail had penetrated, he knocked again, oh, so softly and tenderly! This time, the door did not shake; but, strange to say, it opened, and there, upon his knees, the once-unwilling host was found, waiting to welcome his Divine Guest. He said to him, "Come in, come in; thou hast knocked in such a way that I can no longer resist thee. I could not think of thy pierced hand leaving its blood-mark upon my door, and then of thy going away homeless, thy head filled

with dew, and thy locks with the drops of the night. Come in, come in; thou hast won my heart, and I yield to thee, thou blessed Lord and Saviour." It is so, I believe, in every case; lovingkindness wins the day. What Moses could not do with his hammer, Christ does with his cross. What Moses, with the two tables of stone, could never do, Christ does with one touch of the finger of his mercy.

This is the doctrine of effectual calling as I see it in the text. Do you all understand it experimentally? Can each one of you say, with Dr. Doddridge,—

> "He drew me, and I follow'd on,
> Charm'd to confess the voice divine"?

If so, may he continue to draw you until, at last, he shall draw you from earth to heaven, and you shall sit down at the marriage supper of the Lamb, to go no more out for ever.

I see also in the text *the doctrine of eternal love.* Why has the Lord drawn his people to himself? Because he loved them "with an everlasting love." To some good people, the word "election" sounds almost like blasphemy. If "predestination" is mentioned, they think it is something dreadful. Yet that doctrine is in the text, and you cannot get the idea of "predestination" away from the word "everlasting." The reason, and the only reason, why any man is ever drawn out from the world, and brought to Christ, is to be found in the eternal love of God. There is nothing more, naturally, in that man than in any other man; indeed, in many cases, he is worse than others. If salvation had been the reward of merit, he would have been left out. There is, by nature, nothing in man to win the heart of Christ. What form, what comeliness is there in human nature in his sight? Shall blackness win the heart of him who is without blemish and without spot? Shall loathsome leprosy be attractive to the Divine Being? Shall deformity so charm the eye of Jehovah that he shall love it? It cannot be; the only reason for God's love to us is that he *will* love us. From that fountain of his own dateless love springs our effectual calling, and everything else that comes to us.

Let us pause awhile, and meditate upon this everlasting love. Let every believer in Jesus think upon it to his own comfort. There are many old things in the world; we like to see old castles, old abbeys, and old ruins; but, long before those castles and abbeys were built, Christ Jesus had proved his love to us by redeeming us from our sins by shedding his precious blood for us on Calvary's cross. We delight to travel in foreign countries, and to see the remains of old Rome, or the pyramids of Egypt, or other wonders of the world; but, long before any of those stupendous structures were piled, God had declared that the Seed of the woman should bruise the old serpent's head. It is delightful to go back, in thought, to the time when the hills were born,—when the hoary Alp was yet an infant, and when the aged ocean was but a babe, sporting in its newborn existence, and clapping its hands in its early glee; but if you go back as far as that, you have not begun to get anywhere near the time when God, in covenant with Christ, gave to him a people, and promised that they should be his for ever and ever. Scientific men

love to go back to the most remote geological periods, to those ages, before man was created, when those various deposits of shells, and bones, and other materials, were made, which are gradually being discovered; but you must go further back than that, yea, you must go back beyond the very first creative act of God, and even then you will not have reached that period of which the psalmist says, "The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him." Fly back, in imagination, if you can, to the time when the unnavigated ether had never been disturbed by the wing of cherub, and when the song of the seraphim had never startled the silence of the infinite; go back to the time when God dwelt alone, and you have only then begun to approach that mysterious eternity when God loved his people "with an everlasting love." This wondrous love, too, was from eternity fixed upon such a worm as I am, and such worms as you are, beloved. What a marvel it is that the Eternal should ever have deigned to think upon me, or upon thee, my brother, my sister! Try to grasp it, if you can; though it is one of those things which only "expressive silence" can set forth. "He loved *me*,—from everlasting!" Feed on this glorious truth, O Christian, and recollect that your being drawn to Christ is the effect of this eternal love, and is, at the same time, the proof of it,—the proof that you were upon God's heart long before he—

> "Spread the flowing seas abroad,
> And built the lofty skies."

Read the text another way, and it will teach us a third doctrine. *The word "everlasting" looks not only backward, but forward.* "I have loved thee with an everlasting love;" that is to say, "I have drawn thee because I intend to save thee to everlasting. I would not have called thee by my grace if I had meant ever to leave thee to perish. I would not have begun the good work in thy soul, by drawing thee with lovingkindness, if I had not intended to bring thee to my glory at the last." O beloved brethren and sisters in Christ, love without beginning is indeed sweet, but there is a still more luscious sweetness in love without end! It will do us good to dilate a little upon this wondrous truth, nor shall we need to draw much upon our imagination in doing so. I can readily picture the time when this dark hair of mine shall be silvered over with grey, and the sunlight of heaven shall begin to whiten my brow; ay, but God's promise is, "Even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you." It needs no great stretch of imagination to look forward to the time when the old man will have to lean upon his staff, and those that look out of the windows shall be darkened, and the grasshopper shall be a burden. Perhaps it will be the lot of some of us young people to grow old together; if so, may we grow ripe as we grow old! But, if we are the Lord's people, we shall be able each one to say, as infirmities increase upon us, "My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." Then we look forward to that silent chamber, where friends will stand by our bed, and whisper, "He cannot last long now." Whether we

shall hear them say it, or not, we cannot tell; but "we know that, if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Now the last moment comes; the death-sweat is on our brow, the death-rattle is in our throat; yet David's words are fulfilled in our experience: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." Now my soul has stretched her wings; she has left mortality behind, to—

"Soar through tracks unknown;"—

but still she sings,—

"Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in thee."

In due time will come the great day of judgment; but—

"Bold shall I stand in that great day,
For who aught to my charge shall lay?
While through thy blood absolved I am
From sin's tremendous curse and shame."

Now the drama of Time is finished. Eternity has come, and we shall be "for ever with the Lord." The sun has spent his fire, the moon has paled her feeble light, the elements have been burned up with fervent heat, the stars have shut their eyes in eternal blindness, and the universe dissolves as the billow's foam sinks into the wave that bears it; but, still, our Lord's words describe the joy of his people: "the righteous into life eternal." Oh, that precious everlasting love of God, always ours, because with lovingkindness he has drawn us!

There is a thief, over there, who wants to steal away this doctrine from me. He has been borrowing the old-fashioned burglarious instruments of dead men,—the pick-locks of Arminius, and the centre-bits of Mr. Wesley,—a good man, but one who was on a bad errand when he tried to take this choice and comfortable doctrine from the children of God. Yet I do not care what any of them may say or do, "for I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." If we are in Christ, there is one thing which should make us feel very safe; if anything could ever divide us from the love of Christ, we should have been divided long ago. Suppose that our troubles could do it; then, it would have been done long since, for we have had a sea-full of them already. Yet, in six troubles, the Lord has been with us; and, in seven, he has not forsaken us. Suppose that sin could do it; then, brethren, it would have been done in the first hour after our conversion. I must certainly make my sorrowful confession,—

"If ever it could come to pass
That God's own child should fall away,
My fickle, feeble soul, alas!
Would fall a thousand times a day."

If the Lord had ever meant us to fall into hell, we should have gone there years ago.

"But," say some, "perhaps we may meet with strong temptations." Yes, probably we shall; but we shall never meet with a temptation stronger than the arm of God can enable us to overcome. Others say, "But perhaps we may backslide." Yes, I know we may; but, if we do, the Lord will say to us, even then, "Turn, O backsliding children, for I am married unto you." Yet others say, "But perhaps we may make the Lord angry with us." Yes, I know we may; but I also remember how he pleaded with those who did so in the olden day: "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together. I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not man."

This is a question about which we need not dispute here, for I do not suppose that there is one member of this church who ever entertains a doubt about the truth of this doctrine. We sing, over and over again,—

> "Did Jesus once upon me shine?
> Then Jesus is for ever mine;"—

and we delight to repeat that confident assurance of Toplady, whose own end was so joyous because of his enjoyment of this precious truth,—

> "Yes, I to the end shall endure,
> As sure as the earnest is given;
> More happy, but not more secure,
> The glorified spirits in heaven."

III. I was to have concluded my discourse by considering our text as A STIMULANT TO SELF-EXAMINATION AS TO OUR STATE BEFORE GOD; but our time has gone, so I can only ask this all-important question,—Men and brethren, have you any part and lot in these things of which I have been speaking? Are you the objects of eternal love?

"That is just what I should like to know," says one; "can you tell me?" Well, I cannot climb to heaven, to read the roll of the redeemed, nor can I tell you of a way to go up Jacob's ladder, to read it for yourself; but there is a way of knowing whether God loved you before he made the world, and whether he will love you after the world has ceased to be. It is this,—has he drawn you with his loving-kindness? Examine your hearts, and see. Have you felt your need of Jesus? Has that need constrained you to pray to him? Has that prayer been answered by your being enabled to put your trust in him? Have you been drawn away from the confidence in which you once boasted? Have you been drawn away from the love of your old sin? Have you—to sum up all,—been made a new creature in Christ Jesus? Then, never doubt your election, and never doubt your glorification. "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover, whom he did

predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified." What art thou at, Mr. Unbelief? Thou art trying to separate glorification from calling; but thou canst never do it, for God has joined them together so securely that neither death nor hell can break the bond that unites them: "whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified." May we all be there, among the heavenly birds of paradise,—

"And vie with Gabriel while he sings,
In notes almost divine,"—

of love without beginning and of favour without end! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

ISAIAH LX.

The subject of this chapter is, "The glory of the Church in the abundant access of the Gentiles, and the great blessings after a short affliction."

Verse 1. *Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the* LORD *is risen upon thee.*

The Church is like the moon, which shines with borrowed light. When God shines upon the Church, then the Church herself shines by reflecting his light. The glory of Jehovah is her glory; if that be withdrawn, she is dark indeed; but when that shines into her, and through her, then her brightness is great indeed.

2, 3. *For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the* LORD *shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.*

There is nothing that breaks the darkness except the light from God's own face; and when that falls upon the Church, then the Church straightway begins to shine in the midst of the darkness, and multitudes come to the light, and even the great ones of the earth, the kings, come to the brightness of her rising.

4. *Lift up thine eyes round about, and see: all they gather themselves together, they come to thee: thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side.*

There is no sign here of the Church of God being deserted; on the contrary, she shall become, through the grace of God, the centre of attraction. Men shall come from distant lands to her; however far removed they were, they shall still come: "thy sons shall come from far." She shall also be increased by the accession of those near at hand: "and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side."

5. *Then thou shalt see, and flow together, and thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee.*

Oh, that we might live to see this happy day, when we shall feel a holy awe because of God's glory as revealed in his Church! This fear is not a servile dread, but a holy awe of God; and then the heart shall be enlarged, we shall deal with great things, wish for great things, attempt great things, do great things, and see great things. "Thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged," for the sailor far away upon the sea, and the whole strength of the Gentiles shall come unto thee.

6, 7. *The multitude of camels shall cover thee, the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah; all they from Sheba shall come: they shall bring gold and incense; and they shall shew forth the praises of the* LORD. *All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered together unto thee, the rams of Nebaioth shall minister unto thee: they shall come up with acceptance on mine altar, and I will glorify the house of my glory.*

These people had mostly been followers of false prophets, but they too shall forsake their fanaticism and their bigotry, and come to unite with the Church of God. Those least likely and furthest off from hope, shall be brought in by the sovereign grace of God.

8. *Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?*

The Church is astonished; she asks, "Who can they be?"

9, 10. *Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring thy sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, unto the name of the* LORD *thy God, and to the Holy One of Israel, because he hath glorified thee. And the sons of strangers shall build up thy walls, and their kings shall minister unto thee: for in my wrath I smote thee, but in my favour have I had mercy on thee.*

The Church of God is one continuously. At first, it was a Jewish Church, and it has never ceased to comprise within its bounds some members of the chosen race. But now, in these latter days, she has broken the narrow bonds of race, and from Tarshish, and the distant isles of the sea, multitudes are already coming to the Church of God, and they shall come much more numerously in the years that have not yet arrived.

11—14. *Therefore thy gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day nor night; that men may bring unto thee the forces of the Gentiles, and that their kings may be brought. For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted. The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir tree, the pine tree, and the box together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary; and I will make the place of my feet glorious. The sons also of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee;*

Or, if they do not themselves come, their children shall; each generation shall include a remnant according to the election of grace; and, in due time, shall come the great ingathering.

14—22. *And all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet; and they shall call thee, The city of the* LORD, *The Zion of the Holy One of Israel. Whereas thou hast been forsaken and hated, so that no man went through thee, I will make thee an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations. Thou shalt also suck the milk of the Gentiles, and shalt suck the breasts of kings: and thou shalt know that I the* LORD *am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob. For brass I will bring gold, and for iron I will bring silver, and for wood brass, and for stones iron: I will also make thy officers peace, and thine exactors righteousness. Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise. The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the* LORD *shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the* LORD *shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended. Thy people also shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified. A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation: I the* LORD *will hasten it in his time.*

"Amen! Amen!" so say we, with all our heart.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

FEEBLE FAITH APPEALING TO A STRONG SAVIOUR.

A Sermon

PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 28TH, 1904,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, March 19th, 1876.

"And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."—Mark ix. 24.

THIS is the case of a man who knew well enough what he wanted, and who was full of anxiety to obtain it; indeed, he was so anxious to obtain it that he prayed most earnestly, and most importunately, for it. He prayed to the right Person, too; for, after having failed with the disciples, he resorted to their Master himself. Yet, notwithstanding all this, at the time recorded in our text, he had not obtained the blessing that he sought.

We probably know of many persons who have not yet been awakened to a sense of their need, and much labour has to be expended by the faithful minister in order to show them their danger, and to make them realize their true condition in the sight of God. They have many spiritual needs, but they do not know what those needs really are. This man had gone further than that, for he did know what was the great need of himself and his son.

Then there are others, who have head knowledge as to their spiritual needs, but they do not seem to be anxious to have those needs supplied. They are stolid, careless, immovable. That was not the case with this man. He knew that he wanted his son to be healed, he was intensely eager that he should be healed, and healed there and then. His heart was moved with compassion for his child, and he was most anxious that the evil spirit should be cast out of him at once. There are some of our hearers, who seem to have desire of a certain kind, but they do not use that desire in the right way. They go about seeking salvation where it is not to be found. They are, to an extent, earnest in their own fashion; but to them the Lord might say, as of old, "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not?"

This man had gone a stage beyond that. He was directing all his

entreaties to Jesus; he was appealing to the great Lord himself, from whom alone deliverance could come. It is a great mercy, my dear friends, if you are brought as far as this poor man was,—to know what you really need, to be anxious to obtain it, and to be making your appeal to Jesus to grant your requests. Yet, with all that, this man had not obtained the boon he was seeking; and there are many, like him, who also have not secured the blessing they are seeking. You are aware of your sin, and you lament it, yet you cannot get a sense of pardon. You know your spiritual needs, and you bemoan them, but you cannot grasp that which can supply them. You have made an appeal to God in Christ Jesus, and you are resolved that you will never leave off so appealing. Yet, for all that, you have not, thus far, received the blessing. There is something or other in the way,—something that hinders you; and I should not wonder—nay, I feel quite certain,—that the thing which hinders some of you from getting what you seek from Christ is your own unbelief. That is the point at which I am going to aim in my discourse, as God shall help me; and I pray that, as I do so, from many a heart may be breathed this confession and cry, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."

I. There are three things in our text; and the first is, THE SUSPECTED DIFFICULTY AND THE REAL DIFFICULTY.

Reading the story carefully, I gather that this man saw difficulties as to his child's cure, but that he never thought of the real one. *He fancied that the difficulty lay in the case of his child.* His words to Christ, "If thou canst do anything," seem to imply that he felt, "This is a case that is quite out of the ordinary run,—something special and singular;—and, therefore, beyond thy power." If I can interpret his thoughts, it is my opinion that he said to himself, "This is too mysterious a case to be cured. An evil spirit has struck my boy dumb, yet that same spirit makes him foam at the mouth, and gnash with his teeth. Those very organs, which refuse to utter articulate speech, are, nevertheless, strangely set in motion. He seems to be taken, too, by this evil spirit, at intervals, and hurried this way and that,—he cannot tell how;—and, at one time, he is hurled into the fire, and, at another time, into the water. It is a most mysterious malady; and, possibly, because it is so mysterious, it is not in the Messiah's line of things."

I have known some, who have thought their case, spiritually, to be very mysterious. They have imagined that there was something about their constitution, or, worse still, that some extraordinary guilt had brought upon them a condition of heart that was peculiarly vicious. They have even fancied that this state of heart had put them beneath the ban of the unpardonable sin, and that others had better beware of coming near them, for their condition was so strange, so singular, so wild, that they could not tell what to think or say of themselves. Sometimes, they are hot, and in the fire; and, at other times, cold, and in the water; with no voice for praying or praising, yet able to curse and to blaspheme. "Ah!" says such an one, "my case is so mysterious that even the Lord Jesus Christ will never be able to save me."

Very likely, too, the father thought that his child's disease was too violent to be cured. He was dashed about, hither and thither, and rent and torn as though his poor body must be dissolved into the atoms of which it was made. He could not be held in or restrained; no government or control could be exercised over him; for the demon carried him, with an irresistible influence, wherever it pleased. The poor father could truly have said, "Look at him now. I brought him into the presence of Christ himself, and there he lay wallowing upon the ground, being rent in pieces by the demon; and now that the paroxysm is past, he lies there as if he were dead, and some say that he really is dead."

I should not wonder if I am addressing a man who thinks that the difficulty as to his salvation lies in the fact that his passions are so violent and so fierce. Possibly, he says, "I kept sober for months; but, all of a sudden, it seemed as if the drink demon overpowered me, and I had an awful bout of drinking till delirium tremens was well-nigh upon me." "Ah!" says another, "I did struggle against a vicious habit which I had formed, and I thought I had overcome it; but, alas! the next time the temptation came in my way, I did not seem to have any more power to resist it than a snow-flake has to resist the wind that drives it along; and I was carried right away by the evil impulse." Some men have a peculiar bent towards evil because of their intense vehemence of character; it was so with Samson, though he had the saving grace of faith. Such men are, perhaps, strongly developed in the thews and muscles of their body; but, certainly, they are in the passions and impulses of their soul. You may bind them with fetters and chains, but the strongest bonds are only like the green withs were to Samson. The devil that is in them seems to be absolutely supreme over them when he puts forth his power. I do not wonder, therefore, if they think that the difficulty, in their case, lies in the violence and suddenness of their sin; but it is not so.

Perhaps this poor father thought that, in his child's case, the difficulty lay in the fact that he had been such a long time a sufferer, even from his childhood. In answer to Christ's question, "How long is it ago since this came unto him?" he said, "Of a child." So a man sometimes says, "Sin is bred in my bones, and it will come out in my flesh. My very nature is corrupt; while I was but a child, I loved sin; and since then, throughout my youth and manhood, I have gone after it greedily, and it has become a habit that is firmly fixed upon me. 'Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?' Then may he, that is accustomed to do evil, learn to do well." Such sinners feel as if they had been steeped and soaked in the crimson lye until there was no hope of ever getting the stain out of them. They have been wanderers from God even from their youth, how can they be brought nigh to him?

Yet we know that the difficulty did not lie in the child's case at all, for Jesus Christ was able to cast the devil out, and he did cast it out. And if that child had been possessed by a whole legion of devils, instead of only by one, Jesus Christ could, with a single word, have cast them all out. No matter how long the demon

had been in possession of the child, nor how vehement and impetuous he might be, Christ could drive him out whenever he pleased. And, at this moment, dear friend, your past life, your sin, your natural corruptions, your inherited vices, your evil habits, which have grown so strong upon you, are not the real difficulty. The Lord Jesus Christ "is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him." He himself said, "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men;" so I care not how bad your case may me,—it may be even worse than I should dare to guess, there may be a secret criminality about it that sets it altogether by itself as an unusual and even unique offence against God; but that is not the difficulty in the way of your salvation. Christ can easily write "*settled*" at the bottom of the long account of your sins, and it is no more trouble to him to write that word at the foot of a long bill than a short one. God can as readily make you a new creature in Christ Jesus, whatever your sins may have been, as if you had been living a strictly moral life. You are spiritually dead in any case, and it is he alone who can give you life. You are lost in any case, and the good Shepherd can just as readily find the lost sheep that has gone far astray as another which is only just outside the fold, for he is almighty; and, therefore, able to do all things. So the difficulty does not lie there.

Perhaps, however,—nay, we know that it was so,—*the father thought that the difficulty lay with Jesus Christ himself*. He seemed to say, "I have done all I can for my child; I brought him to thy disciples, but they could not cure him, and now I have brought him to thee. If thou canst"—but he had hardly got those words out of his mouth before the Lord Jesus addressed him, in a peculiar Greek idiom, which cannot be fully translated into English, but which might run something like this: "The *if thou canst*"—that is exactly the Greek word,—"the *if thou canst* believe, all things are possible to him that believeth;" as much as to say, "The *if thou canst* does not lie with me. Oh, no! The *if thou canst* lies with thee." He takes the man's word, and hurls it back at him. I daresay the man may have thought, "If his disciples *cannot* cure my child, at all events their Master *does not*. He has seen how afflicted he is; if he could have done it, surely he would at once have said to my child, 'Be healed;' yet there he is, standing still, and talking to me, as if this were not a pressing case of urgent need. It must be want of power on his part that keeps him from curing my child." But Jesus Christ will not let such a thing as that be said without showing that it is not true; and, brethren, if you harbour in your heart any idea that there is a want of power in the Lord Jesus Christ to save you, you are believing a most atrocious falsehood, and defaming the almighty Saviour. The difficulty, in your case, is not either in the sin or in the Saviour. He is able to forgive the greatest conceivable transgressions of all who believe in him; and he is able to break and to renew the hardest heart, even though it should be hard as steel or like the nether millstone.

II. We have now to consider, in the second place, THE TEARFUL DISCOVERY: "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."

What was his discovery? Why, his discovery was, *that he did not believe;* and that is where the real difficulty lay. When did the man make this discovery? When he began to believe. Is it not a very singular thing that, as soon as ever he had a little faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, he discovered the great abyss of his unbelief? "Lord," said he, "I believe; but, oh! I do also disbelieve so much that my unbelief seems to swallow up my belief." Until a man gets faith, he may think that he has got it; but when he gets real faith in Jesus Christ, then he shudders as he thinks how long he has lived in unbelief, and realizes how much of unbelief is still mixed with his belief. There are many of you, who have never believed to the saving of your souls; yet you say, "Oh, yes! We believe the Bible; we believe in God; we believe in Jesus Christ." You stand up in church, and say, "I believe in God the Father almighty, Maker of heaven and earth," and so on, but you do not do anything of the sort. If you did, you would be saved; since, true belief in Jesus Christ brings salvation to everyone who so believes. While men have no faith,—I repeat what I said just now,—while men have no faith, they are unconscious of their unbelief; but, as soon as they get a little faith, then they begin to be conscious of the greatness of their unbelief. When the blind man gets a little light into his eyes, he perceives something of the blackness of the darkness in which he has been living; so, you must be able to say, from your heart, "Lord, I believe," or else you will never be able to pray, as this man did, "help thou mine unbelief." Even the small measure of faith is needful to discover the great measure of the unbelief.

This man, *as soon as he discovered his unbelief, was distressed and alarmed at it.* He could not look straight at Christ, and say, "Lord, I do disbelieve thee, but I cannot help it." No, he was distressed about it; he felt how dreadful a thing it was to be unbelieving; and he appealed to Christ, confessing his unbelief, and saying, "Lord, help me out of it, I beseech thee." Notice how he turned his whole attention to that one matter of his own unbelief; he did not even mention his poor child. His child was, no doubt, still in his thoughts; yet his prayer was not concerning his child, but concerning his own unbelief, for he saw that was the difficulty needing to be removed. And when God, in infinite mercy, visits a poor troubled heart, and gives it even a little faith in Jesus Christ, its great distress is concerning its remaining unbelief, for it perceives that this is the greatest of all sins, the most terrible of all stumbling-blocks, and is, indeed, the chief hindrance to men's entrance into rest of heart, and into eternal life.

Now, look, all of you who are seeking Christ, but who say that you cannot get peace. The difficulty lies here; if you can believe, all things are possible to you; but it is because you do not believe, that you remain as you are.

Let me show you what it is that you do not believe. You say that Christ cannot save you. Then, you believe that omnipotence—you dare not say it is not omnipotence,—has for once met its match. Look that statement in the face,—that the Eternal Son of God has a task set him which he cannot perform; in other words,

you do not believe in the omnipotence of God, for, if he be omnipotent, he must be able to save you.

Next, sinner, when you say, "Jesus cannot save me," you cast a slur upon his precious blood. You stand, in imagination, at the foot of his cross, and you see him bleeding away his very life, yet you say, "The merit of that blood is limited; I know it is, for it cannot atone for my sin." You are trampling upon the blood of the Son of God, and counting it an unholy thing, by declaring that your sin is more mighty than his infinite sacrifice.

Again, after shedding his blood for sinners, Christ went back into heaven, and a great part of his occupation there is to make intercession for the transgressors. Yet you say that his intercession cannot be powerful enough to avail for you, although I have already reminded you that God has said, "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." To say of yourself, "Christ cannot save me," or to say of any other man, "He cannot save that man," is to insult his blood, and to cast a slight upon his ever-living plea. What greater crime can there be than thus to limit the Holy One of Israel,—ay, to limit him both when bleeding on the cross and sitting on his throne? I charge you, sirs, to feel the utmost horror at the very thought that you should have been guilty of such a crime against the Lord Jesus Christ. God has declared that "he that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy." The apostle John, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, declares that "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." If, then, you say, "But it cannot cleanse me from my sin," you give the lie direct to the most solemn revelations and pledges of the divine mercy. Do you mean to do that? Oh, how often shall we have to remind you that, whether you mean to do so, or not, that is what you are doing? Remember how the loving John writes, "He that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son."

In addition to insulting the Son as to the efficacy of his blood, and insulting the Father concerning his veracity;—bear with me, sinner, in bringing these grave charges against you; and as God bears with you, you may well bear with me as I remind you of your sin;—you also insult the Spirit of God by your unbelief, for you as good as say, "The Spirit of God cannot renew my heart; he cannot bring me to repentance; he cannot bring faith to me." Yet the Spirit, the Father and the Son, is himself God, infinite and almighty. It is a great sin for anyone to say, "The Spirit cannot regenerate me; there is no hope for me."

It is possible that you, poor despairing sinner, think that your despair proves that you are humble; but it is not so. Despair is one of the proudest things in the world, for it dares even to tell the almighty Spirit of God that he cannot—*he cannot*—save. I beseech you, do not say so; but, if you have faith enough to believe that Jesus is omnipotent, and that there is unlimited value in his blood and his plea; that the Father is true, and that his promises must be

fulfilled; and that the Spirit of God is able to work such a change in your heart that old things shall pass away, and all things shall become new; then be alarmed to think that there should be any unbelief remaining in you, and cry out, with tears, as this man did, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."

III. Now comes our third point,—THE INTELLIGENT APPEAL.

The man has seen where the difficulty lies; he has made a discovery as to his own unbelief; and now he turns round to Jesus, and he cries, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." Kindly notice the wording of the man's prayer as recorded in the 22nd verse: "If thou canst do anything, have compassion on us, and help us." See that word "help." And, now, when he is convinced of his unbelief, look at his prayer: "Help thou mine unbelief;"—the same word that he had used before. In his first petition, looking at his poor child wallowing on the ground, he cried, "Help us." But now he has been taught better, and he says, in effect, "Lord, I see that it is easy work for thee to cast a devil out, but the difficulty is that I am unbelieving, and that hinders thee, Lord. Help me to believe, for that is what is wanted." I should recommend some of you,—instead of praying, "Lord, give me a sense of pardoned sin, give me a new heart, give me to feel that thou lovest me,"—pray those prayers by-and-by; but, for the present, pray like this, "Lord, help me to believe; Lord, give me faith; Lord, drive away my unbelief." Direct your prayers to that one point, for that is the matter in which you are lacking. Unbelief is the great stone lying at the door of your heart, and preventing that door from being opened.

Notice that *this man's prayer was intelligently addressed to One, who, he believed, could help him.* He seemed to say to himself, "If Christ can help my child to get well, then he can help me to believe." Believe that, sinner; and ask him to help you to believe. His prayer was addressed to One in whom he did believe, in a measure; for he would not have prayed to Christ to help his unbelief if he had not felt that Christ could do so. And he did say, "Lord, I believe." He was a strange mixture of belief and unbelief; and so are you, my dear friends; but I charge you, with the little faith you have got, if you believe that Jesus can save other people, go to him, and beseech him to cast out of you the unbelief which is still lurking within you. The chief reason why you have not peace with God, why you have not found the conscious enjoyment of eternal life, is that you lack faith; you need your unbelief to be cast out.

I am going to close my discourse by showing you that *there is nobody but the Lord Jesus Christ who can help us to get rid of unbelief;* and by advising you to take your unbelief, and all your other sins, and confess them to Christ as sins, and then ask him to enable you to get rid of them. It ought to enable you to see how Jesus Christ does help you to get rid of unbelief if you consider his nature; if you rightly understand that, it will be a death-blow to unbelief. Who and what is Jesus. You believe—I know you do,—that he is "very God of very God,"—that Jesus of Nazareth is "over all God, blessed for ever." If you will only

think of that great fact, it will help you to believe in him. Cannot you trust your soul in the hands of God? Is he not able to deliver you? Is he not able to pardon you? "The Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins" because he is God. If I had an angel sent to be my Saviour, I dare not trust him. When any man says that he can forgive my sins, I will not trust him, for I know that he is a liar and a thief, trying to rob God of his prerogative. When Jesus Christ, the Son of God, says that he can save me, I cannot find any reason why I should not believe him, and I do not believe you can suggest any such reason. Unbelief is a most unreasonable thing, but faith is most reasonable and right. As Christ is divine, my natural inference is, "Then I will trust him."

Moreover, our Lord Jesus Christ is man as well as God; and such a man as the world has never seen before or since. You have read the story of his life; did you ever read of any other man so gentle, so tender, so true, so kind, so full of affection, so willing to live and die for others? What, not trust him? Oh, it seems to me as if I could not help trusting him. Certainly, ever since I have known my blessed Lord and Saviour, I have felt that I could say to him, as David did, "They that know thy name will put their trust in thee." Son of God, and Son of man, thy very nature helps to banish our unbelief; and, as soon as we rightly understand it, we feel that unbelief is an unnatural, illogical, and wicked thing.

Think also, for a minute or two, of his great offices. Our Lord Jesus Christ has a thousand offices, but there is one upon which I especially love to dwell. He is a Saviour; he "came into the world to save sinners." Many people imagine that they cannot be saved because they are sinners; but that is the very reason why they can be saved. You remember how Martin Luther puts it. He says, "The devil came to me, and he said, 'Martin Luther, you are a big sinner; you are so great a sinner that you cannot be saved.'" Luther replied, "I will tell you what I will do, Satan; I will cut off your head with your own sword; for if I am a sinner,—and I know that it is so,—Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, so I believe he came to save me, and I have trusted my soul to him for time and eternity." A doctor does not come to heal those that are healthy, he naturally looks after the sick; and a Saviour does not come to save those who need no saving, but he comes to save sinners; so that your sinnership, instead of being a disqualification, is, to speak broadly, a qualification. Just as filth is a qualification for being washed,—just as poverty is a qualification for receiving alms,—just as sickness is a qualification for medicine, so your very sin and vileness are qualifications for Christ's work of grace in you. I am using expressions that some will think strange, yet I am speaking, nevertheless, what is absolute truth. Does it not help to remove your unbelief to hear that Jesus is "mighty to save"?

Think, next, of the anguish which Christ endured when he offered up himself as the great atoning sacrifice for his people's sin. I have never been able, for a single instant, to believe in any limit to the value of the atonement offered by Christ on Calvary. It does seem to me to verge upon blasphemy to suppose that, if God himself

becomes incarnate, and suffers, and bleeds, and dies, there can be anything less than infinite value in the atonement that he offers. So then, sinner, as it is infinite, it can cover your case; as it is without bounds, there cannot be a bound set to it so far as you are concerned. Look at Christ on the cross, and you will not dare to say, "He cannot save me." Know what he is, and who he is; see how he suffers, how the Father smites him, and yet how the Father loves him all the while; and you must say, "Christ's blood must have sufficient power in it to take away all the guilt of all who trust him." It is so; believe it, and that will help to drive away your unbelief.

Remember, too, dear friends, that, when Christ died upon the cross, he was not working out a trifling scheme of salvation. It was a sublime enterprise that took him from his throne in heaven, and brought him down to the manger in Bethlehem. It was a God-like undertaking which made him lay aside the sceptre, and bear to have great nails thrust through his hands. It was a great scheme, and therefore it included great sin, great pardon, and great salvation; so, if you are a great sinner, you match the general scale of the whole scheme, which is of such huge proportions that it can encompass even you.

Christ's design in dying, too, ought to help to kill your unbelief. Why did he die? Was it not that the free grace of God might have full swing and abundant scope; and will it not have full swing if you are saved, and is there not great scope for pardoning mercy in you? Remember, dear friends, our Lord Jesus Christ never thought it was worth his while to come from heaven to give glory to a man: he came from heaven to bring glory to God, by vindicating his justice, and manifesting his mercy. Now, if such a sinner as you are,—you who think yourself too bad to be saved,—if you get saved, what a display of divine grace there will be in your case! A man said to me, some time ago, "If ever I get to heaven, sir, I believe they will carry me about the streets, and exhibit me as a marvel of God's mercy." "Well, then," I replied, "they will have to carry me round as well." I suspect that every saved soul in heaven is a great wonder, and that heaven is a vast museum of wonders of grace and mercy, a palace of miracles, in which everything will surprise everyone who gets there. It has been well said that there will be three surprises in heaven;—first, we shall not find some we thought we should meet there; then, we shall find some we never thought would be there; but the greatest surprise of all will be to find ourselves there! I think it will be so;—not that we shall be astonished at the fact when we remember God's promise, and what he has done for us; but we shall be amazed when we recollect what we used to be, and what the grace of God had to do for us to make us fit to be there. Well, if you are one of those who will be carried all round heaven as a marvel of mercy, I believe you are the very person who is likely to get there, because God wants the angels and all the redeemed to see the wonders of his grace displayed to us-ward who believe.

I close with this one thought. If, poor soul, it is your want of

faith that stands in the way of the blessing coming to you, and if that want of faith is infamous on your part, since you give God the lie; I charge you to repent of it, and to believe God, here and now. If you still say, "I know not how to believe, and I cannot trust," I dare not try to excuse you for saying so. Unbelief is the greatest of all crimes; I know of none to match it. But, if you really want help in fighting against your unbelief, cannot you go to Christ for it? Even while you are thinking about him, you will believe in him. If you want to trust his blood, think of his blood. If you want to trust him as a living, loving Saviour, think of him as a living, loving Saviour. "Faith cometh by hearing." When you are hearing about it, thinking about it, reading about it, the Holy Ghost will breed faith in your soul. Oh, do get faith, whatever else you do not get! May God enable you to exercise saving faith in Jesus Christ before you rise from your seat, lest, in this very building, you should stumble into death and into hell! Do I need to ask you, sirs, a thousand times, to believe the truth? Must I, over and over again, say to you, as Jesus said to the Jews, "Because I tell you the truth, ye believe not me"? If Christ is not worthy of being believed, then he is a liar. If Christ cannot be trusted, then he is wrongly named. Oh, do not drive us to the inference that you think thus of him! Commit your soul into his hands this very moment, and have done with it, once for all, for his dear name's sake. Amen!

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

MARK IX. 2—29.

Verses 2—6. *And after six days Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up into an high mountain apart by themselves: and he was transfigured before them. And his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them. And there appeared unto them Elias with Moses: and they were talking with Jesus. And Peter answered and said to Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. For he wist not what to say; for they were sore afraid.*

Brethren, like these disciples of our Lord, we are not yet fit to be favoured with a sight of his glory. As we now are, we could not bear it. As our poet says,—

> "At the too-transporting light,
> Darkness rushes o'er my sight."

These three apostles of Christ were too bewildered to know what to say, they were quite lost, and I suppose that, if we could go to heaven as we are, our bewilderment would even exceed our bliss. But we may rest assured that God will prepare us for that which he has prepared for us.

7, 8. *And there was a cloud that overshadowed them: and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him. And suddenly, when they had looked round about, they saw no man any more, save Jesus only with themselves.*

And although this was not so ravishing or so astonishing a sight, yet it was more encouraging to them,—something which they could more easily bear with joy and peace: "they saw no man any more, save Jesus only with themselves." May God grant to us, as long as we are here below, that,

if no Moses or Elias shall ever come to visit us, at any rate Jesus may never be absent from us! May our fellowship with him be unbroken!

9, 10. *And as they came down from the mountain, he charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen, till the Son of man were risen from the dead. And they kept that saying with themselves, questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean.*

These were Peter, and James, and John, the three most privileged disciples of Christ,—probably, the best scholars in that class which had the Lord Jesus Christ himself for its Teacher; yet his plain language was without meaning to them: "questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean." I wonder whether, when our Lord comes the second time, we shall discover that the prophecies concerning his advent were wonderfully clear, but that we could not understand them till he came. Plain as his teaching concerning his resurrection was, his disciples could not understand it till that great event had really occurred.

11—13. *And they asked him, saying, Why say the scribes that Elias must first come? And he answered and told them, Elias verily cometh first, and restoreth all things; and how it is written of the Son of man, that he must suffer many things, and be set at nought. But I say unto you, That Elias is indeed come, and they have done unto him whatsoever they listed, as it is written of him.*

John the Baptist had come, in the spirit and power of Elijah, and had reconstituted matters, and prepared the people for the advent of the Saviour, whose herald he was.

14, 15. *And when he came to his disciples, he saw a great multitude about them, and the scribes questioning with them. And straightway all the people, when they beheld him, were greatly amazed, and running to him saluted him.*

Some relics of the glory on the mount still remained upon his face, and the people were astounded; so, though deeply interested in the battle which was proceeding between the scribes and the disciples, they left them, and turned to look upon that mysterious radiance which hovered about his brow.

16. *And he asked the scribes, What question ye with them?*

The circumstances of the disciples resembled a battlefield on which the enemy was winning the day, and the loyal troops were about to die defeated; when suddenly, the great Commander himself appears for their relief. His presence is worth more than a thousand battalions of men; and he charges at once upon the adversary, and puts them to rout: "He asked the scribes, What question ye with them?"

17. *And one of the multitude answered—*

One who had a peculiar reason for answering;—just as, I trust there will be one in this multitude before me who will have a peculiar reason for listening to my message, and a peculiar reason for remembering it after it is delivered: "One of the multitude answered"—

17—19. *And said, Master, I have brought unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit; and wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him: and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away: and I spake to thy disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not. He answereth him, and saith, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him unto me.*

I suppose our Lord's rebuke was meant specially for his disciples. It was something like the speech of a schoolmaster, who, having taught his pupils the same lesson a great many times, and laboured hard with them, from year to year, yet finds them failing in the very elements of knowledge. Christ does not speak as if he were tired of his life, and wished to get away

from his disciples; but this is his way of saying how disappointed he is that these learners have learnt so little.

"How long shall I suffer you? bring him unto me." Those words struck my heart very forcibly as I read them: "How long shall I suffer you?" Does not the Lord Jesus Christ have to put up with a great deal from every one of us? I applied his words to myself, and I thought I heard him saying to me, "How long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you?" Often, he must derive more pain than pleasure from intercourse with many of his people. How grieved he often must be to see their slowness to learn, their readiness to forget, and the difficulty with which they can be brought to live the lessons which he so carefully imparts to them! Then note what his action is concerning the poor child: "Bring him unto me."

20. *And they brought him unto him: and when he saw him, straightway the spirit tare him;*

As soon as ever Christ looked at him, "the spirit tare him." One look from Christ awakes the devil. Sometimes, sinners are worse for a time when Christ looks upon them. The devil always has great wrath, when he knoweth that his time is short; and he rages and tears most violently when he is about to be ejected. The Jews have a proverb, "When the tale of bricks is doubled, Moses appears," and we may make it into a Scriptural proverb, "When the devil's torment of the heart is doubled, then Jesus appears to cast him out."

20. *And he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming.*

And Jesus, instead of curing him at once, gave his first attention to the other patient before him, namely, the father of the child, He was suffering from an equally bad disease, though the symptoms were different, and Jesus meant to cure him as well as his boy.

21, 22. *And he asked his father, How long is it ago since this came unto him? And he said, Of a child. And ofttimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him: but if thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us.*

He put himself on a level with his child, and that is the best way to pray for your children: "Have compassion on *us*, and help *us*." It will be compassion on you, as well as upon your son, if the Lord saves him.

23. *Jesus said unto him,—*

Catching at his words, "If thou canst do anything,"—

23—29. *If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief. When Jesus saw that the people came running together, he rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him. And the spirit cried, and rent him sore, and came out of him: and he was as one dead; insomuch that many said, He is dead. But Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up; and he arose. And when he was come into the house, his disciples asked him privately, Why could not we cast him out? And he said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting.*

There are some things, which we are not fit to do until we have drawn very near to God, and have been deeply humbled, and, with sincere repentance, and the gracious operation of the Holy Spirit, have been cleansed so as to receive so great a boon. Faith alone will not accomplish everything. Faith must be accompanied by prayer, and prayer must be, at least sometimes, in special cases, attended with fasting. The Lord makes reserves of his mercies, which he does not give immediately even to the request of faith; he demands importunity on our part, and heart-searching, and heart-cleansing, before the blessing will be bestowed.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

FORGIVENESS AND FEAR.

A Sermon

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DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

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"There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared."—Psalm cxxx. 4.

THIS is good news; indeed, the best of news; and they will prize it most who are like the psalmist was when he wrote these words. And who are they?

First, they are those who are in soul-trouble: "Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord." Some of you may, perhaps, think this subject is a very commonplace one, but the soul that is in deep spiritual trouble will not think so. Bread is a very commonplace thing, but it is very precious to starving men. Liberty is an every-day enjoyment to us, but it would be a great boon to those who are in slavery. O you, who are in the depths of soul-trouble, like shipwrecked mariners who seem to be sinking in the trough of the sea, or being dragged down by a whirlpool, this text will bring sweet music to your ears! "There is forgiveness;" there is forgiveness with God.

This good news will also have a peculiar sweetness to those who have begun to pray. Read the second verse: "Lord, hear my voice: let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications." Prayer makes men value spiritual blessings. They are asking for them; they are sincerely seeking them; they are knocking loudly at mercy's gate in order to obtain them; and they who are in earnest in their prayers prove that they value the blessing they are seeking, and they are delighted to hear that they are likely to secure it. Oh, that it might be said, for the first time, of someone here, "Behold, he prayeth." I am sure that such an one will be right glad to listen to even the simplest language that tells out these glad tidings: "There is forgiveness with God."

And if, to soul-trouble and earnest prayer, there should be added a very deep sense of sin, amounting even to utter self-condemnation, then I am quite certain that there is no carol that will have sweeter music in it than my text has. Read the third verse, and see if you

can truly repeat it: "If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?" Do you feel that your iniquities condemn you? Are you compelled to plead guilty before God? Well, then, though you cannot claim acquittal on the ground that you have no sins, yet here is the blessed information that there is forgiveness for sinners. Stand in the dock, where the guilty ought to stand; and let the Judge condemn you. Nay, spare him the trouble, condemn yourself; and, when you have done so, and have also trusted the great atonement made by his dear Son, he will say to you, "There is forgiveness; be of good cheer: thy sins, which are many, are all forgiven thee." I do not expect to say anything to delight deaf ears; but I do believe that the simple tidings I have to tell will have great weight with those who are in soul-trouble, with those who have begun to pray, and those who are self-condemned on account of sin.

I am going to take the text thus. First, here is *a most cheering announcement:* "There is forgiveness with thee." Secondly, here is *a most admirable design:* "That thou mayest be feared."

I. First, here is A MOST CHEERING ANNOUNCEMENT: "There is forgiveness with thee."

This announcement has great force and value, because *it is most certainly true.* When a man hears some news which pleases him, he loses that pleasure if he has reason to suspect that it is not true. The first questions you ask, when someone tells you of some good fortune that concerns you, are of this sort, "Are you quite sure it is so? Can you give me good authority for your assertion?"

Well, this news is certainly true, for *it is consistent with God's very nature.* He is a gracious God. "He delighteth in mercy." Mercy was the last of his attributes that he was able to reveal. He could be great and good when the world was made, but he could not be merciful until sin had marred his perfect handiwork. There must be an offence committed before there can be mercy displayed towards the offender. Mercy, then, I may say, is God's Benjamin, —his last-born, his favoured one, the son of his right hand. I never read that he delighteth in power, or that he delighteth in justice; but I do read, "He delighteth in mercy." It is the attribute that is sweetest to himself to exercise. When he goes forth to punish, as he must, his feet are, as it were, shod with iron; but when he comes to manifest his mercy, he rideth, as David says, "upon the wings of the wind." He delighteth to be gracious; therefore, I feel sure that there is forgiveness with him.

We are even more sure that it is so when we remember that *God has given us the best pledge of forgiveness by giving us his dear Son.* He could not be merciful at the expense of his justice, for his throne is established in righteousness; and that righteousness requires that he should by no means spare the guilty. How, then, could he display his grace and mercy, and yet be the just God? He did it thus. The offended One took the nature and the place of the offenders; and here, on this earth, Jesus of Nazareth, who was "very God of very God," suffered all that we had brought upon ourselves, that the law might be honoured by executing its full

penalty, and yet that the free grace and mighty mercy of God might be equally manifest. If any of you doubt whether there is forgiveness with God, I pray you to stand on Calvary, in imagination, and to look into the wounds of Jesus, gaze upon his nail-pierced hands and feet, his thorn-crowned brow, and look right into his heart, where the soldier's spear was thrust, and blood and water flowed out, for the double cleansing of all who trust him. O Christ of God, it could not be that thou shouldst die, and yet that sinners cannot be forgiven! It would be a monstrous thing that thou shouldst have bled to death, and yet that no sinner should be saved by that death. It cannot be; there must be forgiveness, there is forgiveness, since Jesus died, "the Just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God."

Moreover, *we have God's promise of forgiveness*, as well as the gift of his Son. His Word says, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." It is declared, by the apostle John, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth from all sin. Many other passages in the Bible teach the same glorious truth: "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy trangressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me, for I have redeemed thee." Time would fail me to mention all the Lord's promises of forgiveness—they are so many. And remember that it is the God, who cannot lie, who has given the promises, so you may be sure that they are all true, and that there is forgiveness with him.

We are certain, also, that there is forgiveness, *because there is a gospel, and the very essence of the gospel lies in the proclamation of the pardon of sin.* The Lord Jesus said to his disciples, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved;" but no one can be saved without sin being pardoned; therefore, there is pardon for the sin of everyone who believes and is baptized according to the gospel command. Christ's ministers may all go home, for their office is useless, if there be no forgiveness of sins. We may shut up all our houses of prayer, for it is a mockery to God and man to keep them open if there be no forgiveness of sins. We may abolish the mercy-seat itself, and burn this blessed Bible, if there be no forgiveness of sins. What value can there be in the means of grace—what can be the use or signification of any gospel at all—if sin be not pardonable? But it can be pardoned; there is forgiveness. If you want evidence in confirmation of that declaration, there are hundreds of us who are prepared to prove that we have been forgiven, and there are hundreds of thousands, now alive, who know that their sins have been pardoned, and that they have been absolved from all their guilt for Christ's sake; and there are millions,

beyond all count, before yon burning throne of God, who continually praise him who loved them, and washed them from their sins in his own blood. I bear my own personal testimony that I know there is forgiveness, for I have been forgiven. If it were the proper time to do so, I would ask all here, who know that their sins have been forgiven, to stand up. If I did so, some of you would be astonished to see how great an army of men and women, in this Tabernacle, would declare that they also have been saved by grace, and that they have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Unless we are all deceived,—and we are not, for we have the witness of the Spirit of God within us that we are not;—and unless all, who have fallen asleep in Christ, have perished, there is forgiveness with God. This fact should make us very joyous, because it is so certain. There is no need to dispute it; I hope none of you will do so. If any of you doubt it, I beg you to come and test it and try it for yourselves, and, with the blessing of God, you will say with the psalmist, "There is forgiveness."

This fact gathers additional sweetness from another source, namely, that *the declaration is in the present tense:* "There *is* forgiveness." When? Now,—at this moment,—there *is* forgiveness. Possibly, you are eighty years of age; but there is forgiveness. Or you may be very young,—a little boy or girl, but there is forgiveness for the young as well as for the old. You tell me that you have already rejected many invitations; yes, but there is forgiveness. It is to be had now, blessed be God, for "behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." Believe thou now in Jesus Christ, God's Son, and thou hast forgiveness now,—in a moment. It takes no appreciable period of time for God to forgive sin. Swifter than the lightning-flash is the glance from the eye of God that conveys peace and pardon to the soul that trusts in Jesus. You would need time to get a pardon signed and sealed by an earthly monarch; but time is out of the question with the God of everlasting love. A sigh, a groan, a genuine confession of sin, a believing glance of the eye to Christ on Calvary,—and all is done, thy sin has passed away, there is forgiveness, and thou hast received it. Therefore, go and rejoice in it.

You must not forget to notice, however, that *this is a fact which refers to God himself:* "There is forgiveness *with thee*,"—and with nobody else. I charge you to spurn, with the utmost indignation, the so-called "absolution" by a so-called "priest", whether of the Church of England or the Church of Rome. Such absolution as that is not worth the foul breath that utters it. I marvel, sometimes, how any man can ever, apparently, delude himself, and try to deceive his sinful fellow-creature, by daring to say, "I forgive thee thy sins." I suppose it is use and habit that makes men do strange things, at which an unsophisticated conscience shudders; but, to me, the blasphemer's coarse oath, that makes my blood curdle as I go down the street, has not half the iniquity in it of the man, who deliberately puts on certain specified vestments, claims to be a priest of the Most High God, and then says to a sinner like himself, "I absolve thee." I think the time has come

when all Christians ought, in every way they can, to shake themselves from this abominable priestcraft and sacerdotalism altogether. The very dress we wear, the very position we occupy in the congregation, should be a protest against this wickedness in the sight of God;—for wickedness it is, of the most extreme kind, though I believe the perpetrators of it do not always know what they do, so we may pray, "Father, forgive them, and open their blind eyes." Go you, sinner, straight to God for pardon, through Jesus Christ; but never, never, go to man. As to confessing your sins to a man,—pouring the dirty sewage of your filthy nature into another man's ear, and making that ear the common cesspool of the parish,—oh, that is intolerable even to ordinary decency,—and much more to the purity which the grace of God suggests. Go you to Jesus, the one Mediator between God and men; go you, and kiss his pierced hands and feet, and confess your sin to him who made the propitiation for it; but go nowhere else, I charge you, at your soul's peril,—lest, like Judas, who first went and confessed to a priest, and afterwards went out, and hanged himself, you should be driven to despair, and a similar awful suicide. O God, as "there is forgiveness with thee," deliver thy poor fallen creatures from the further dreadful degradation of bowing themselves down before sinners like themselves, confessing their sins, and seeking pardon where it cannot be found. There is forgiveness, but that forgiveness is only to be obtained from God, through Jesus Christ, his Son.

Notice, next, in the text, *the unlimited character of this forgiveness:* "There is forgiveness with thee." You see, there is no word to limit it; it does not say that there is forgiveness only for a certain number; there is no such restriction as that. Nor does it say that there is forgiveness only for a certain sort of sin; there is no such limit as that. Nor is it said, "There is forgiveness up to a certain point, or forgiveness up to a certain date." No, but the declaration, "there is forgiveness with thee," stands out in all its glorious fulness and simplicity, with no abridging or qualifying words whatsoever. Do not thou, poor sinner, put a limit where God puts none; but bui'd thy hope of pardon and salvation on this declaration, and go thou to God, through Jesus Christ, and thou shalt find that there is forgiveness for thee,—even for thee, at this very hour. I pray that thou mayest prove it to be so.

Let me also add that *the forgiveness, which God gives to a sinner, is complete.* He blots out all sin. It is also *sincere;* he really does forgive when he says that he does. It is *lasting*, too. God does not forgive us to-day, and accuse us again to-morrow. Nay, let me give you a better word than lasting; God's forgiveness is *everlasting.* He, who is once forgiven, is forgiven to all eternity. Forgiveness is one of the gifts of God that are without repentance; he never gives it, and then repents that he has done so. If thou dost get forgiveness from God, thou hast the first link in an endless chain of mercies. Thou shalt become God's child,—his beloved. He will teach thee, care for thee, keep thee, sanctify thee, bless thee, perfect thee, and, in due time, bring thee to heaven. Oh, the heap of blessednesses which lie in this one gracious gift of God,—the forgive-

ness of sins! I wish that, by any power of mine, I could induce all of you to seek this forgiveness. Nay, I retract that expression; I do not wish that any power of mine should do it, lest I should have the honour of it; but I do pray that God's power may do it for all of you,—that you may be made conscious of sin, and believe in Jesus Christ, and so find that perfect pardon which God is waiting and willing to give to all who trust his Son.

II. Now I pass on to the second part of our subject, which is A MOST ADMIRABLE DESIGN: "There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared." How does forgiveness cause men to fear God?

First, *it is clear that God's design in proclaiming forgiveness is the opposite of what some men have said and thought.* We have known many, who have said, "There is forgiveness, so let us keep on sinning." Others, not quite so base, have said, "There is forgiveness, so we can have it whenever we please." Holding this idea, they have trifled with sin, and they have delayed to seek forgiveness, drawing—oh, I am ashamed to say it of my fellow-men!—drawing the infamous inference that, as God is merciful, they may live in sin as long as they like, and then find mercy at the last. I would like any man, who has adopted that strangely cruel and wicked way of dealing with God's mercy, to look straight at it for a minute. I do think that, if I had a friend whom I had grieved, and I knew that he was ready to forgive me, I should not, therefore, put off the reconciliation, and so grieve him still more; I should be very base indeed if I did act like that. Or if I were a child, and I had vexed my father, but he was very gentle and forgiving, I think that, if I were to say, "It does not matter much; father will forgive me whenever I ask him, I shall not ask him for months, or perhaps years;"—if I did talk so, it would be very base on my part. I ask you, brothers and sisters, not to talk so, and not to act so. It is not fair and just treatment of our gracious God; it is not worthy even of man. Why, if even a beast is treated kindly, it will scarcely return a kick for kindness. Some perverse animals will do that, but most will generally at length yield to kindness; and the longsuffering of God ought much more to lead you to repentance, and not induce you to continue in your sins.

This design of God is quite contrary to what some other men have said would naturally arise out of the doctrine of free and full forgiveness. So-called "priests" have said, "If men can have pardon by simply believing in Jesus, they will cast off all restraint; so, let us keep them under our thumb,—tell them that there are certain 'sacraments' that they must attend, and that they must look up to us, and then we will get them into purgatory; and then, when sufficient money is paid to us, we will get them out." But pardon, —free pardon, perfect pardon, pardon given on the spot to simple faith,—they tell us that this would tend to demoralize people. Well, that is a subject on which they can speak; for nobody has demoralized people more than so-called "priests" have done; but it is evident that God does not agree with them. It is written here, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, "There is forgiveness with thee, *that thou mayest be feared;*" so that, instead of destroy-

ing any man's fear, or reverence, or religion, the gift of a free pardon is to be the very means of producing such a condition of heart and life. Let us look at this point for a minute or two.

In the first place, *if there were no pardon, it is quite certain that nobody would fear God at all.* There is no forgiveness for the devil and all his legions, and there is not a devil that has any reverence or love or adoration for God. No, they abide in sullen despair. They know that there is no hope for them; and, being shut up to despair, because their sin is unpardonable, they rage and rave against the God of heaven. You never read of a devil on his knees in prayer. Whoever heard of a devil saying, "Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice: let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications"? And why do not the devils pray like that? Why, because, among other reasons, there is no forgiveness for devils; and, therefore, none of the right kind of fear of God. They tremble, I grant you. They have a certain sort of dread; and, without pardon, there may be a dread and horror of God; but that is not what our text means, for the fear of God, in Scripture, does not signify dread; it signifies true religion, holy reverence and awe: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom;" and, unless there is pardon of sin, it is clear that its absence drives the sinners to despair, and prevents them from worshipping God.

Again, *if there were no pardon, there would be nobody to fear God;* for, brethren, if God had not had mercy upon us, he would long ago have swept us away. It is mercy—even if it be not pardoning mercy, it is mercy—which permits us still to live. If God had no pardon for any of the whole human race, there would be no necessity for reprieving men at all, the tree of humanity would long since have been cut down as a cumberer of the ground.

Now turn to the positive side of this subject. When the gospel is faithfully preached, and attentively heard, the very hearing of it, under the blessing of the Holy Spirit, *breeds faith in the soul;* for "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." But, brethren, suppose we had no pardon to preach, would there be any faith then? Could there be any faith then? Have you ever heard of a man who believed in an unpardoning god? Did anybody ever yet hear of a sinner believing in a god who manifests no mercy, and bestows no forgiveness? Only the heathen trust to such gods, which are no gods. The very fact that pardon is proclaimed, and carried to the heart by the power of the Holy Spirit, produces faith in the soul; and faith is the root and foundation of all true fear of God.

After faith, comes *repentance;* or, rather, repentance is faith's twin-brother, and is born at the same time. Nobody ever repented until he heard of pardon. Let a man be certain that he cannot be pardoned, and you may be quite sure that he will not repent. He may feel remorse; he may regret and lament his sin because of the penalty which follows it; but that gentle softening of the soul, which makes us hate sin because it is committed against such a good and gracious God, is not possible until, first of all, the heart has

believed that there is forgiveness with God. Evangelical repentance is one of the fruits of the gospel of forgiveness, and no other tree can produce it. So, you see, beloved, that, because there is forgiveness, men exercise faith, and they also experience repentance; and these two graces are a very large part of what is meant by the Scriptual term, "the fear of the Lord."

It is also the good news of pardon that inclines the heart to *prayer*. You would never have heard of a man praying for mercy if there had been no mercy to be obtained. If Jesus had never died, and the gospel had never been sent into the world; if there had been no proclamation of pardon, it would never have been said of Saul of Tarsus, "Behold, he prayeth." No; prayer arises in the soul as a result of the telling of the glad tidings that pardon is to be had; and prayer, like faith and repentance, is a large part of "the fear of the Lord." The man, who truly prays, is certainly one who fears God.

When a man really receives the pardon of all his sins, he is the man who fears the Lord. This is clearly the case, for pardon breeds *love* in the soul; and the more a man is forgiven, the more he loves. Where great sin has been blotted out, there comes to be great love. Well, is not love the very core of the true fear of God? If a man really loves God, has he not discovered the very essence of true religion? But how could he love God if there was no pardon to be had?

Pardon also breeds *obedience*. A man says, "Have I been forgiven? Then I will seek to avoid all sin in the future. Out of love to God, I will labour to do that which he bids me do." And, surely, obedience is a very large part of the fear of God.

And, oftentimes, this forgiving love of God breeds in the soul *deep devotion and intense consecration to him*. There have lived, and there are living now, men and women, who have given their whole selves to Jesus, many of whom are labouring for him even beyond their strength; ay, and many such men and women have died, for his sake, the most cruel deaths, without shrinking back, or seeking to escape that terrible cross. Whence came such a fear of God as that? Why, it could never have come into their hearts if they had not received the forgiveness of their sins for Christ's sake; but, having been forgiven, they came to love and fear—not with a servile fear, but with a holy awe,—the blessed One through whose precious blood they had been cleansed. Thus, forgiveness of sin is essential to true fear of God; and wherever it is enjoyed, it is the main motive which moves them to fear God, and brings them into that blessed condition. Is not that clear to all of you?

I finish my discourse by asking and trying to answer this question,—*As there is forgiveness to be had, why should not* YOU *have it?* I may not be able to point "*you*" out, though, often, God does direct my finger, or eye, or word, to the very person for whom there is forgiveness. So I ask again,—As there is forgiveness to be had, why should not *you* have it? Young man, under the gallery, why should not *you* have it? Young woman,

down in the area, why should not *you* have it? Suppose you should never get it? Suppose you should die without being forgiven? Oh, that would greatly aggravate all the ordinary pains of death! If you die unpardoned, your doom will be the more terrible because there is forgiveness with God, yet it avails not for you. One of my predecessors, Dr. Rippon, had considerable influence with the government of his day. Those were what some foolish people call "the good old days," when they used to hang people on a Monday morning, as a regular thing, and take little notice of it. It so happened that one, who was related to a former member of this church, was condemned to die. It was believed that he was innocent, so there was much intercession offered on his behalf to the government, and a pardon was granted and signed by King George III. Very providentially, it happened that one of the members of the church, going to the prison, said to the governor, "I hear that you have eight prisoners to hang to-morrow." He answered, "I have nine for to-morrow." "No," said the other, "there were nine, but one of them has been pardoned." "I know nothing about that," said the governor, "I have received no pardon; and, unless I do receive one, I shall hang him to-morrow morning." The news came to Dr. Rippon, and he took the postchaise,—in those times, that was the only way of travelling,—and rode down to Windsor. He went to the castle, and, by dint of that modesty, which is always becoming in a minister of the gospel, if it is not carried too far, he pushed himself in, and demanded to see the king. He managed at last to get to the ante-room, next to the one where his Majesty was sleeping. Hearing a noise, the king asked, "What is that?" His attendant answered, "Here is a Dr. Rippon, who says he must see your Majesty." "Show him in, then," said he; and he saw the king in bed, and said to him, "Your Majesty gave a pardon to such-and-such a man." "Yes, I know I did." "But they have not got it at the prison, and the man is going to be hanged in the morning if I do not get back to London in time." So the king posted the good doctor back with another pardon, and the man was saved. Suppose he had been hanged, what would his parents have said? Well, they might have said, "There was forgiveness, yet he was hanged." I think that would have been the bitterest ingredient in their grief,—that they had obtained forgiveness for him, and yet, after all, that he was hanged. Happily, it was not so; but, sirs, as there is pardon to be had, if you will not ask for it,—as there is pardon to be had by confessing your sin, and believing in Jesus, yet you will not seek it;—why, then, when you are lost, you will say to yourself, "Oh, what a fool I was! There was forgiveness, but I neglected to seek it. There was forgiveness, but I did not realize that I needed it; so I have perished by my own folly." I charge you, men and women, to remember that, if you are lost, your doom will be far more terrible than that of those who have never heard the gospel, because you have had the way of salvation plainly set before you, and I have again exhorted you, as best I can, to walk in it. Oh, how I wish I could exhort you with more earnestness, and in more persuasive

words; but, perhaps, even then, there would be an equal failure! I do implore you, do not put from you eternal life; do not refuse the pardon that the Lord Jesus Christ presents to all who trust him. Trust him, I pray you, trust him now; and the pardon shall be yours.

"But," says someone, "I am afraid of what I may do in the future. If I were forgiven now, I am afraid I should again act just as I have done before." Well, then, take the text as a whole: "There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared." If you receive the forgiveness of God, you will have the fear of God put into your heart at the same time, for this is a part of the ancient covenant: "I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you." Poor sinner, here is a wonder of grace for you,—the past forgiven, and the future guaranteed by a wondrous miracle of mercy wrought within your heart, making you a new creature in Christ Jesus.

Blessed Spirit, apply this message to the Lord's own chosen ones, and save many precious souls through it, for the Redeemer's sake! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

PSALMS XXXII., AND CXXX.

Psalm xxxii. Verse 1. *Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.*

No man knows the blessedness of pardoned sin but the man who has felt the weight of guilt upon his conscience. If you have ever been burdened and crushed under a load of sin, it will be a joy worth more than ten thousand worlds for you to get the burden lifted from your shoulders: "Blessed"—blessed beyond description—"is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered."

2. *Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.*

He has no need to dissemble now, for his sin is forgiven. David had tried to tamper with his conscience after his great sin. He invented all sorts of excuses and schemes, to try to hide his guilt; but when, at last, he was fully convinced of the awful sinfulness of his sin, and when God had put it away for ever, then, when the guilt was gone, the guile went, too.

3, 4. *When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah.*

As if he was parched and scorched with inward grief. The agony of his soul kept him from sleeping, prevented him from taking his neccessary food, and made him seem like a prematurely old man.

5. *I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah.*

O blessed termination of a terrible condition of heart! Confession pulled up the flood-gates of his soul, and God caused the black stream to flow away and disappear. Friend, are you trying to conceal any sin, or to excuse yourself in any wrong course? Then, your soul will fret and worry more

and more. But make a clean breast of it before God, in the humblest and most honest language you can use, and then you shall receive the Lord's full and free forgiveness.

6. *For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found: surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him.*

A man, who can pray, shall see even the ocean driven back, as Moses did. If you get nigh to God, and keep nigh to him, the floods of great waters shall never get nigh to you.

7. *Thou art my hiding place; thou shalt preserve me from trouble; thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance. Selah.*

The world is full of music to the man to whom God has said, "I forgive thee." Do not rest, dear friend, till you really know that you are forgiven; for if you do, you will rest short of all true happiness. But if you have sought God's mercy, and had your sin forgiven, you are already at the gates of heaven.

8. *I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye.*

When God forgives, he also sanctifies. When he has brought back the sheep that wandered off into the wrong road, he afterwards leads it in the right track. Notice how the Lord says, "I will guide thee with mine eye." A look from the Lord ought to be enough to guide us; we should not need a blow, nor even a word, but be ready to be directed by the very gentlest monition of God's gracious Spirit.

9. *Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee.*

Do not be difficult to manage. Be not hard-mouthed. Be ready to be guided by the eye of God. Be not like stubborn beasts, that must be held in with bit and bridle, and that often need the whip, too.

10. *Many sorrows shall be to the wicked:—*

Wicked man, that is the portion that is to come to you; and it will surely come to you if you continue in your present evil course. This is the title-deed of your future inheritance; do you like the prospect of such a possession as that? "Many sorrows shall be to the wicked:"—

10, 11. *But he that trusteth in the* LORD, *mercy shall compass him about. Be glad in the* LORD, *and rejoice, ye righteous: and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart.*

Let your joy be demonstrative. Do not be ashamed to let others see how happy you are. The Lord hath done great things for you; therefore, "be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous: and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart." Be so jubilant that others shall be compelled to glorify God with you, and to ask, "May not we also share this great blessing with you?"

Psalm cxxx. Verse 1. *Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O* LORD.

"Sinking, sinking, sinking,—drowning, dying,—hope all but gone, almost everything gone,—yet I have cried unto thee;—with much fear, and little hope, 'Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord.'"

2, 3. *Lord, hear my voice: let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications. If thou,* LORD, *shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?*

Judged by ourselves, on the ground of absolute justice, none of us can hope to stand before his judgment seat without being condemned. I trust that we all know and feel that this is true.

4, 5. *But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared. I wait for the* LORD, *my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope.*

Never yet has any poor soul perished that could use such language as this. It may be a long while before you get the full comfort of all the Lord's promises; but you are sure to have it sooner or later, if you can but hope "in his Word." Well did good John Newton sing,—

"Rejoice, believer, in the Lord,
Who makes your cause his own;
The hope that's built upon his Word
Can ne'er be overthrown."

6–8. *My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning: I say, more than they that watch for the morning. Let Israel hope in the* LORD: *for with the* LORD *there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption. And he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.*

Children of God, plead that precious promise: "He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities;" and never rest till you are fully freed from the bondage of sin; for God will work a perfect work in you, and then he will take you home to be with himself for evermore.

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THE SWORD AND THE TROWEL.

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Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

PRISONERS DELIVERED.

A Sermon

PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MAY 12TH, 1904,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, April 2nd, 1876.

"As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water. Turn you to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope: even to-day do I declare that I will render double unto thee."—Zechariah ix. 11, 12.

THIS text primarily relates to Israel,—to the Jews,—and there can be no doubt whatever that there are great blessings in store for God's ancient people. Although blindness in part hath happened unto Israel, yet, in due time, we know, from the Word of God, that the seed of Abraham will recognize our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ as the long-promised Messiah. When that happy day comes, the Lord will give to the whole world times of amazing blessing. The fulness of the Gentiles also will then be experienced. Then, too, shall come the latter-day glory of Jerusalem, and all nations shall rejoice with her.

You notice that the text begins with the words, "As for thee also," which might be translated so as to run parallel with that pathetic exclamation of our Saviour, when he wept over Jerusalem, and said. "If thou hadst known, *even thou*, at least in this thy day; the things which belong unto thy peace: but now they are hid from thine eyes." The Hebrew of our text might be rendered, "As for thee, *even thou*," and the meaning of the expression is, "There is some very special blessing for thee, O Jerusalem! It is not for the heathen; but, as for thee, O Zion,—thou seed of Abraham according to the flesh,—there is something special in store for thee." I think we ought to pray for the Jews more often than we do, and to look more hopefully upon the Jews than we usually do, and not to speak of them as an unbelieving race. The fact is, they have been, in some respects, too believing, for they have blindly clung to the old faith of their fathers, instead of going on to know the Lord Jesus Christ. When they do accept him, that firm adherence, which they have shown to the traditions of their sires, will make them grandly strong in faith in the only true Messiah. I

suppose, however, that we have no Jews with us here; so it is no use, just now, for me to address them, but I may use the text as a message to ourselves. While I do so, may the Holy Spirit bless it to us all! When we read, in the Scriptures, concerning Israel, we may fairly translate it to mean, spiritually, the Church of God; for, as all who believe are the children of believing Abraham, so all who have been born again, by the power of the Holy Spirit, belong to the chosen seed, and may be rightly called "Israel." In this spiritual sense, how sweetly has our text been fulfilled in the experience of many of us, who are the true Israel of God, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Sarah acknowledge us not!

What a wonderful history "the Church of the living God" has had! She has been, as Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed." I have sometimes seen, in Scotland, what they call vitrified forts, which have, evidently, passed through the fire to such an extent that the whole of the wall has become vitrified into one firmly united mass; and the Church of God seems to me to have been like those vitrified forts, for the fire has been concentrated upon her seven times hotter than anywhere else. Yet, to this day, the Church of Christ still firmly stands, the truth of God is still to the front, and the name of Jesus is still—

> "High over all,
> In hell, or earth, or sky,
> Angels and men before it fall;
> And devils fear and fly."

So shall it be even to the end. The 48th Psalm reminds us of the glory of the ancient "city of the great King," and of the terror that fell upon her adversaries: "For, lo, the kings were assembled, they passed by together. They saw it, and so they marvelled; they were troubled, and hasted away. Fear took hold upon them there, and pain, as of a woman in travail." So shall it be with the present race of sceptics and rejectors of Christ. Hundreds of generations of sceptics have come and gone, like the sere leaves of autumn. They were fresh and green, for a little while, and then they professed to be a shade to the Church with their "philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ;" but, ere long, they withered, and fell, and rotted into the soil from whence they sprang. Yet still the truth of God abideth, and "the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth," still standeth fast, awaiting the grand consummation when the topstone shall be placed upon the glorious temple amid shoutings of "Grace, grace unto it."

Looking into this passage, we notice, first, that *there are some prisoners mentioned, and they are said to be in a terrible plight.* Then, in the second place, *there is an emancipation spoken of, and the cause of that emancipation is mentioned.*

I. First, THERE ARE SOME PRISONERS MENTIONED, AND THEY ARE SAID TO BE IN A TERRIBLE PLIGHT. We need not look long to find those

prisoners, for some of them are here in our midst; and there are others here, who were once imprisoned thus, but they have been set free.

These prisoners are said to be *in a pit.* It was a common custom, and still is, in the East, not to go to the expense of building prisons, but to make use of dry wells,—and the authorities were not always very particular in seeing that they were dry,—and they just let the prisoner down by a rope, which they pulled up, leaving him in what was, usually, a very secure prison indeed. No trouble was taken to fit up a proper cell; no money was expended upon ventilation, or anything of the kind. The pit was, usually, deep and dark, and a great stone was rolled over the mouth of it; and there the prisoner was left, in solitary confinement, often to die of hunger and thirst. If anyone thought or cared to bring him bread and water, it was well for him; but, in many cases, the prisoners were forgotten; and nobody ever heard of them any more. In fact, they were buried alive; and that was, spiritually, our condition when we were in the pit wherein is no water.

I look back, twenty years or so ago, and see myself, as I then was, in that horrible pit,—consciously in that pit. We were all there by nature, but we did not know it; but, at the time I am recalling, I did know it. The Lord had opened my eyes, and led me to see that I was in a deep, waterless pit by reason of the original sin in the fall of Adam. I saw that I was cast down into a deep pit from which I could not get out by my own exertions,—with a nature averse to everything that was good,—with a will that was strong for evil, but impotent for good,—with a judgment that was out of gear,—a taste that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter,—a heart that had turned aside unto idols,—with everything about me as wrong as wrong could be. I distinctly remember that I did not trouble so much about the original sin through the fall as I did about my own actual sins and transgressions. Oh, those dreadful walls of guilt that rose up all around me! Dense was the darkness in which I was enveloped, and the few gleams of light that ever pierced that darkness only made me see the more clearly the huge black walls of my old sins; my youthful sins, not forgotten to this day, but remembered with deep regret,—sins of thought, sins of imagination, sins of word, such sins as I was capable of committing at that period of my life. Well do I recollect that pit of actual sin. Perhaps some of you are in it at this moment. It is a horrible pit for anyone to be in, and it is peculiarly so to some men. If a man has lived for many years in sin, and only in his later life, perhaps when verging on old age, has begun to get enough light to show him what he really is in God's sight, it is an awful thing for him to wake up, and find himself in the pit of condemnation as the result of both original and actual sin.

There was a man, once, who lay asleep, and, as he slept, he dreamt that he was in a gorgeous palace, with marble halls and gold and gems in the utmost profusion; but, as a matter of fact, he was, all the while, asleep in a loathsome hole where everything was polluted and foul. When he awoke, the gilded walls had all gone,

and the marble halls had all vanished; and, realizing where he was, the fleeting pleasure of his dream was changed to the abiding misery of the actual facts of his sorrowful experience. Possibly, I am addressing some who have just woke up out of their life's dream, and have discovered where they are,—where they are by nature, and where they are by practice, too;—down, down, down, in a deep pit wherein is no water. For, be it known to you that, whenever a man finds himself lost by nature, and by practice, too, he very soon finds that he is also lost by the just condemnation of God, for the thrice-holy Jehovah cannot look upon a polluted heart without abhorrence. It is not possible for him to see sin without being angry. Some people, in these degenerate days, have invented for themselves a god who equally loves all men whatever their characters may be, and who looks upon loathsome imaginations and filthy thoughts with an altogether indifferent eye, and still goes on to bless, let men do what they may. But such a god as that is not the God revealed to us in this old-fashioned Book: nor is he my father's God, nor mine, nor yours; indeed, he is like the idols that are no gods at all. No, where there is sin, justice demands that there should be condemnation, and it also requires that there should be punishment as well; so this is the dreadful thing about our condition by nature that, when we were held in the bonds of sin, we were also condemned, and lay in the condemned cell, only awaiting the hour of execution. That was our condition, spiritually,—like prisoners in a pit.

We are also told, in our text, *there was no water*. Now, generally, in a pit, you do find some water; it drops from the clouds, if it comes from nowhere else. When Jeremiah was let down, with cords, into the dungeon of Malchiah, we read that "in the dungeon there was no water, but mire: so Jeremiah sank in the mire." It is only natural that, in deep holes sunk in the earth, the water should stand in a pool at the bottom. But this pit, of which our text speaks, has all the disadvantages, and none of the advantages, of an ordinary pit. It is called, as though with an emphasis, "*the* pit wherein is no water;" and there are some ungodly men who are in just such a pit as that. There are others who are up to their armpits in water,—very muddy stuff it is,—I should not like to drink it, yet they seem able to quench their thirst with it. They are the men who take pleasure in sin and enjoy iniquity; but, brethren, when God means to save a man, he makes him realize that he is in a pit in which there is no water. When a man has reached that point, all "the pleasures of sin" have vanished. He finds that he cannot any longer be pleased with that which once used to afford him great delight. Some of you know what this strange experience means,—that the very things you used to crave have become most loathsome to you. Your soul lusted after them, and you said, in your youth, "If I could only have these things, I should be the happiest mortal on the earth." Well, you have had your fill of them, and you do not want any more. You are sick of them, as one may eat honey till he loathes the very sight of it. I have heard of a poor flower girl,

in the streets of London, who used to sell violets all day long, taking home at night those she had left. Having them always about her, she said that she hated the smell of violets; and God can make men hate the smell of their sweetest sins, and flee from them with disgust; he can turn their sweet wine into sourest vinegar, so that they will be as glad to get away from it as they once were fond of running to it.

When a soul is in this condition, in the pit wherein is no water, it often happens that even the lawful comforts of earth lose their usual comforting force. Well do I recollect the time when I was in this waterless pit. It mattered very little to me what I ate or drank. It made but a slight difference to me whether it was day or night; for, by day, I dreaded the wrath of God, and if I fell asleep at night, I dreamt of it, and wondered, when I awoke, that I was not already in hell. Even those youthful games, and those lawful amusements, into which, as a lad, I entered, lost all charm for me. If you have read John Bunyan's "Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners," you know that, at the time when he was under conviction of sin, nothing comforted him at all. There seemed, to him, to be no brightness in the sky, no flowers on the earth, and no melody in the sweetest songs of the birds. Well, if it be so with any of you, dear friends; if you are in a pit wherein is no water,—none whatever,—I hope my text applies to you, and that you belong to the special class of prisoners to whom the Lord thus speaks: "As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water." The Lord is speaking of those who secretly belong to the covenant race of Israel, his own chosen and redeemed ones. Though you know it not as yet, your name is recorded in the Lamb's book of life. Though his love has not, as yet, been fully made known to you, he has ordained you unto everlasting life; and, therefore, though you are at present in the pit, you cannot die there, and you cannot always lie there; though you are at present without water, you shall never perish of thirst. You may be brought to dire distress, but you shall then prove that man's extremity is God's opportunity. As the Lord liveth, who chose you by his grace, long before he made the heavens and the earth, he will bring you, as his prisoners, out of the horrible pit and the miry clay, set your feet upon a rock, and establish your goings.

That is the first thing mentioned in the text,—prisoners in a very terrible plight.

II. Secondly, THE TEXT SPEAKS ABOUT EMANCIPATION, AND THE CAUSE OF THAT EMANCIPATION IS MENTIONED: "By the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water."

Delivered from that horrible pit! How did they get out? The text tells us that *God sent them out of it.* Oh, that awful pit of natural depravity,—that dreadful pit of actual sin,—that fearful pit of just damnation! Nobody ever yet came out of that pit except by divine power; nor need anybody ever wish to escape by his own power, for if he did so escape, he might be dragged back

again into the dungeon. If a prisoner be released by the king himself, who will dare to re-arrest him? If the Lord himself delivers us, where is the power that can put us back into the pit again? It is Jehovah who says, "I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water." Some of us recollect the time when the Lord did thus send us forth. None but he could have done it; but he did it, and did it thoroughly; he snapped every fetter that was upon us, lifted us right up out of the abyss, and fully and for ever emancipated us,—all glory to his ever-blessed name!

Then our text tells us *how God did it:* "By the blood of thy covenant." Oh, what a grand way of deliverance this is! Do you know what this expression, "by the blood of thy covenant," means? There was a covenant, between God and his chosen people, made of old, ere the day star had first cast his bright beams athwart the darkness. To make that covenant sure, God's only-begotten and well-beloved Son had agreed with his Father that he would ratify it with his own blood; and, in due time, he came to this earth and fulfilled that covenant by offering up himself as the God-appointed Victim in the stead of guilty men. Now, brethren, it is by that blood of the everlasting covenant, offered in our stead, that we were set free from the bondage of sin. I heard, the other day, that some wise man had said that if a preacher wanted to be popular,—by which I suppose he meant, to draw many to hear the gospel,—he must preach blood, and fire, and smoke! I do not know what the smoke has to do with it; but I do know that there is nothing that has such power as the precious blood of Christ, which cleanseth from all sin, and that, next to the blood of Jesus, there is nothing that has such power as the blessed fire which comes down from heaven, touches the preacher's lips, and makes him speak, with fervour and enthusiasm, of that precious blood. There is no man, either living or dead, who was ever sent forth out of the pit of soul-despair except by the blood of the covenant. I can assure you of one thing,—the man, who can do without the atoning sacrifice of Christ, has never known what true conviction of sin is. Men and women, who received their "religion" by natural descent, or who jumped into it in the excitement of a revival meeting, may, perhaps, be content to do without the blood; but, if the Lord has put you into the pit wherein there is no water, and brought you up out of it, you know that there was no deliverance for you until God, in human flesh, made atonement for your sin by his blood; and, to this hour, if ever you are disturbed and doubtful concerning your true position in God's sight, you always come back to the blood of the everlasting covenant, offered upon Calvary's cross, and you sing,—

> "Dear dying Lamb, thy precious blood
> Shall never lose its power,
> Till all the ransom'd Church of God
> Be saved to sin no more."

If, sirs, you take away the atoning sacrifice, you make that blessed Book to be a mere husk from which the kernel has been

withdrawn If you take away expiation by the precious blood of Jesus, you tear away the sinner's only ground of hope; indeed, his only hope; and you leave us of all men most miserable. I know that, when I understood that Jesus Christ bore, in my stead, all that I deserved to bear of the wrath of God,—and that his death had made the law of God honourable, so that the Lord Jehovah could pardon me without doing an injustice to the rest of mankind, and without suffering the honour and glory of his righteous rule to be tarnished,—I grasped it at once. It seemed, to me, to be far better than the balm of Gilead to my wounds when the great Physician laid his pierced hand upon me, and the blood of his covenant cleansed me from all guilt; and I pray that many others here may have the same experience. Of one thing I am sure, if you really grasp this truth, you will never let it go, you never can let it go. This precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, will be to you your hope, your rest, your joy, the seal of your covenant with God, and the cause of your walking at liberty for ever, for if the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed.

I should like to have said more upon this blessed theme, but time fails me, so I must only say, in passing,—"Let every Christian remember that, if once he knows the power of the blood of Jesus, there is a covenant existing between him and his God, and he can say, with David, "He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure." Believer, betwixt thy soul and the Maker of heaven and earth, there is a compact which can never be broken. Though earth's huge pillars bow and break, this covenant stands for ever sure. You being in Christ, and Christ being in you, you shall be saved, world without end, for God hath declared it, and his truth stands fast for ever.

III. Thirdly, our text contains A RECOMMENDATION TO THOSE WHO ONCE WERE PRISONERS: "Turn you to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope." I thought, dear friends, that you were pulled up out of the pit; *have you been made prisoners again?* If it is so, it is very sad, but you can never be imprisoned as you were before. Perhaps you have not been living as carefully as you ought; or, for some other reason, your faith has become weak, and so you have fallen into the pit again; but you are not now in prison as you were before; for, now, you believe you will get out again; nay, better than that, you are sure that you will. Albeit that, sometimes, Giant Despair tells you that you will die in the dungeons of Doubting Castle, you know that you have a key called "Promise" in your bosom; and though you have not used it as you should have done, you have the firm conviction that it will open any lock that old tyrant has made, and you hope, some day, to employ it to such good purpose that you will be again free. But, sirs, you had no business to get into that pit again. When the Lord once set you free, you should have taken good care not to go back again into bondage.

It is a great mercy that you can never go back to such bondage as you once experienced. You are prisoners, it is true; but *you are*

"*prisoners of hope*." Therefore, take the good advice of the text: "Turn you to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope." That same Lord Jesus Christ, who, by his precious blood, once set you free, is still a refuge from every storm and every enemy; and if you are wise, you will cry to him to deliver you this very hour. I address myself to every brother and every sister in Christ who has, in any sense, and to any degree, become again a prisoner. My dear friend, the Lord delivered you, years ago, did he not? Do you not recollect, with intense gratitude, what he did for you then? Well, he can deliver you again at this very moment. You remember how joyfully you sang,—

> **"He took my feet from the miry clay,**
> **And set me upon the King's highway."**

Well, he can do the same thing again, and do it now. Go to him at once. You do not want a better deliverer than the Lord who is "mighty to save," do you? And as he was able to deliver you when you were so far gone as you used to be, he can surely deliver you now. You say that you are so foolish, and so insensible, that you cannot make yourself enjoy the means of grace as once you did. It seems to you that, as you get older, you get more insensible. Well, but, my dear brethren, you are not spiritually dead, are you? And yet, when you really were dead in trespasses and sins, Christ quickened you; then, surely, he can bring you out of this state of torpor, and restore you from this strange swoon into which your soul has fallen. Turn you to Jesus now, just as you came to him at the first. If you cannot come to him as a saint, come as a sinner. Oh, the many hundreds of times that I have done that! And I expect to do it many more times before I get to heaven. "What!" asks someone, "do *you* have to do that, Mr. Spurgeon?" Oh, yes; that I do! The devil says to me, sometimes, "you are no child of God." It is no use to begin arguing with him about that matter; the best way to answer him is to say, "Well, Satan, if I am not a child of God, I soon will be, for I will receive Christ as my Saviour, and that will make me God's child." "Then," says the devil, "you talk about your faith; but you have no faith to talk about." "Very well," I reply, "if I have not any, I soon will have some, for I will begin to believe in Jesus now." Then he says, "Your Christian experience, as you call it, is all a delusion." Well, I never argue with him about that, but I say, "Suppose it is a delusion; it is still true that 'Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,' and he has promised to save all who trust in him; so, here and now, I do trust him, and I am saved." Satan is a very old lawyer, he has been in the profession for many centuries, and he knows how to raise all manner of quibbles and difficulties, and he can argue and reason in a very crafty fashion; so, your best plan is not to answer him at all, except just to say, "I have put my case into the hands of my great Advocate, the Lord Jesus Christ. If you have anything to say, you must say it to him." That is my earnest advice, and it is the advice of the text, too, to all Christians who have, in any sense, come into bondage again:

"Turn you to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope." If you do that, you shall soon come into light, and liberty, and joy, and peace once more.

IV. The last thing in our text is, A DOUBLE BLESSING PROMISED: "Even to-day do I declare that I will render double unto thee." If you turn to Christ, you shall get a double blessing. What does this part of the text mean?

Well, it means that *God has such abundant grace to give that he will not only give you what you really need, but he will give you twice as much as that.* All the flowers in God's spiritual garden bloom double. There never was any mercy of his which had not many other mercies wrapped up in it. Every one of them contains far more blessing than we thought it did. Now, dear brother, can you open your mouth wide, and ask from God some great thing? If you do so, you shall receive from God twice as much as you asked for. Do you feel a great need within your soul,—a need that is truly dreadful? It craves so much that it seems to be like the two daughters of the horseleech, crying, "Give, give." Well, God will give you so much that you shall have sufficient to satisfy that craving twice over. Have you had some very great trouble? Then, believe in the Lord, and you shall have double as much joy. Have you had deep depression of spirit? You shall have double as much of holy exultation and delight. Has the Lord laid his rod very heavily upon you, and made you sorely smart? Then he will give you two kisses to every blow. Has he made you drink out of the bitter cup? Then he will bring you a double draught of the spiced wine of the juice of his pomegranate; two cups of that heavenly nectar for every cup of quassia that you have had. He will make your consolations to abound and superabound far above all your tribulations.

"Well," say you, "I am expecting something very great from the Lord." I am glad of it, but you will receive twice as much. The Queen of Sheba expected a great deal when she went to see Solomon, yet she had to say, "The half was not told me." So shall you find it with God. I read, in the Scriptures, that God is love, but his love to me has been a thousand times better than I ever expected it would be. I did think that, when I came to trust under the shadow of his wings, that I should have mercy and grace and peace; but I never dreamt how much mercy, and grace, and peace I should have. And, brothers, I believe it is better on before, and that there is something, yet to come, brighter and sweeter than anything I have ever known; and it shall be the same with you. The Lord will go on to double your blessings, and give you yet more and more, according to that blessed text, "Of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace,"—grace upon grace.

I beg you specially to notice that *this is a present promise:* "Even *to-day* do I declare that I will render double unto thee." Then, why should you not get some of this double joy this very moment? I know that you said, as you were coming to this service, "I do not think I ought to stop to the communion; I do not feel fit to go to the table of the Lord. I seem to be as lifeless as a log. If I go and

sit there, it will merely be to eat the bread, and to drink the wine, but not to enjoy real fellowship with the Lord." Ah, my brother, my sister, if that is true concerning you, it is to you that the text says, "Turn you to the strong hold." Turn to Christ as you did at the first; and, then, it may be that your fellowship with him will be sweeter than even that which you enjoyed when first you came to his table. It is the Lord who says, "Even to-day do I declare that I will render double unto thee." Plead the promise, in silent prayer, just now; if you do so in faith, I shall be surprised if you do not get a double blessing from the Lord very speedily.

Finally, *note how true the promise is.* When God says, "Even to-day do I declare that I will render double unto thee," who among us dares to doubt his declaration? I have sometimes heard people say, when they have wanted to be believed, "I declare to you that it is so;" and you know that the law of the land now allows those of us, who object to the taking of an oath, to make an affirmation, and to say, "I do solemnly declare that such-and-such is the fact;" and, in that fashion, God says, "Even to-day do I declare that I will render double unto thee." Well, then, take him at his word, and "turn you to the strong hold." While you are sitting here, trust the Lord to give you the double blessing that he has promised. If you do that, you may each one say, as you go home, "'Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Ammi-nadib.' I had no idea, when I went into the house of prayer, that I could be so changed. I was singing, no, I mean, howling or growling,—as I went up the steps,—

> "'Dear Lord, and shall I ever lie
> At this poor dying rate?
> My love so faint, so cold to thee,
> And thine to me so great?'

"yet, when I came out, I was able to sing, and almost to shout,—

> "'If ever I loved thee, my Jesus, 'tis now.'"

God grant that this may be the happy experience of many of you, for Christ's sake! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

ZECHARIAH IX.

Verse 1. *The burden of the word of the* LORD *in the land of Hadrach,*—

Or, Syria,—

1, 2. *And Damascus shall be the rest thereof: when the eyes of man, as of all the tribes of Israel, shall be toward the* LORD. *And Hamath also shall border thereby; Tyrus,*—

That is, Tyre,—

2—4. *And Zidon, though it be very wise. And Tyrus did build herself a strong hold, and heaped up silver as the dust, and fine gold as the mire of the streets. Behold, the Lord will cast her out, and he will smite her power in the sea; and she shall be devoured with fire.*

This prophecy was literally fulfilled. Tyre was attacked by Alexander

the Great, and after withstanding a long siege, was destroyed by him. The strength of the city lay in the fact that it was built right out into the sea, and that it was protected by a vast, massive mole. Also as a great trading centre it possessed enormous wealth, and so was able to hire mercenary soldiers. But all its power and its wealth could not preserve it from destruction; and although we read of Tyre in the New Testament, it is now only a place for the drying of the nets of a few poor fishermen, even as Ezekiel foretold that it would be (xxvi. 14). When God foretells destruction, it always comes; but, blessed be his holy name, when he promises blessing, that comes just as surely.

5. *Ashkelon shall see it, and fear; Gaza also shall see it, and be very sorrowful, and Ekron; for her expectation shall be ashamed; and the king shall perish from Gaza, and Ashkelon shall not be inhabited.*

When Alexander invaded the country, the Philistines expected that he would be hindered by the Tyrians; but, when Tyre fell, the Philistines were easily conquered. That shows you the meaning of the prophecy, and how literally it was fulfilled.

6. *And a bastard—*

Or, stranger—

6, 7. *Shall dwell in Ashdod, and I will cut off the pride of the Philistines. And I will take away his blood out of his mouth,—*

That is, the prey that he had caught: "I will snatch it out of his mouth," —

7. *And his abominations from between his teeth: but he that remaineth, even he, shall be for our God, and he shall be as a governor in Judah, and Ekron as a Jebusite.*

There is no doubt that, after the days of Alexander, many Philistines became proselytes to the faith of the Jews, and were absorbed into the Jewish nation, so that an Ekronite became like an Israelite; and this is a symbol of what God is doing all the world over. He takes men, who are strangers and foreigners to the citizenship of Zion, and puts them among his people, and treats the Ekronite as a Jerusalemite. Blessed be his name for this great act of sovereign grace.

8. *And I will encamp about mine house because of the army, because of him that passeth by, and because of him that returneth: and no oppressor shall pass through them any more: for now have I seen with mine eyes.*

And so it was. Alexander went to Jerusalem, after destroying Tyre, but he did not attack the city. There was a strange restraint resting upon him, which prevented him from touching the house of the living God. I need not repeat the well-known story of how he was met by the high priest, whom he recognized as the man whom he had seen in a dream, and so, though he smote Tyre and Philistia, he suffered the people of God to go free.

But, after that time, something better happened. That great event is marked off by a new paragraph in our Bible, and well it may be:—

9. *Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee:—*

Not Alexander the Great, but "thy King." "Thy King cometh unto thee:"—

9. *He is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.*

What a beautiful and faithful description of our Lord Jesus Christ! We wonder that Israel cannot see the Messiah here. Had this verse been written after the coming of Christ, it could not more accurately have described the blessed person and character of our Lord Jesus. His very

riding into Jerusalem upon an ass, with her colt trotting by her side, is most plainly foretold here.

10. *And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off: and he shall speak peace unto the heathen: and his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth.*

This is our glorious King,—the King, whose conquests are not achieved by horses, and chariots, and battle-bows, but by the more powerful panoply of truth and love. Blessed are all who dwell beneath the rule of such a King as he is.

11, 12. *As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water. Turn ye to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope: even to day do I declare that I will render double unto thee;*

Christ has come to set the prisoners free, and to be the stronghold of his people. Therefore turn ye to him, and all manner of precious blessings shall be yours.

13. *When I have bent Judah for me, filled the bow with Ephraim, and raised up thy sons, O Zion, against thy sons, O Greece, and made thee as the sword of a mighty man.*

This is a truly wonderful passage, setting forth how God is going to use his people as the weapons by which he will conquer the world. He will bend Judah, and make her into a bow, and take Ephraim, and make her into an arrow; and then he will shoot his strangely-fashioned shaft against his adversaries and ours! What does this mean but that he is going to use those of us, who are his own saved ones, that he may conquer the world by us? And what a blessed battle this is! "Thy sons, O Zion, against thy sons, O Greece;"—the simple believer against the cultured man of reason without faith,—the humble truster in the Lord Jesus Christ against the man who proudly boasts of his own learning and eloquence! How will this battle end? We know which side will win, for "the Lord of hosts is with us: the God of Jacob is our refuge."

14. *And the LORD shall be seen over them,*

As he was in the midst of his people of old.

14. *And his arrow shall go forth as the lightning: and the Lord GOD shall blow the trumpet, and shall go with whirlwinds of the south.*

Here you have a foresight of Pentecost, and the grand era which succeeded the outpouring of the Spirit. Oh, that we might once again prove what God's almighty Spirit can do!

15. *The LORD of hosts shall defend them; and they shall devour, and subdue with sling stones; and they shall drink, and make a noise as through wine; and they shall be filled like bowls, and as the corners of the altar.*

You remember that the mockers said, on the day of Pentecost, "These men are full of new wine." They were not; as Peter plainly declared, "These are not drunken, as ye suppose;" neither does this prophecy mean that they would be so; but that the Spirit of God should fall so copiously upon them as to fill them, like bowls brimming over with precious liquid, or like the corners of the altar drenched for Elijah's sacrifice. It is a grand thing when believers in Christ are thus filled to overflowing with the Spirit of God, and energy divine; they are the men who will win the battle for the cause of God and truth.

16, 17. *And the LORD their God shall save them in that day as the flock of his people; for they shall be as the stones of a crown, lifted up as an ensign upon his land. For how great is his goodness, and how great is his beauty! corn shall make the young men cheerful, and new wine the maids.*

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

"WHO IS ON THE LORD'S SIDE?"

A Sermon

PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MAY 19TH, 1904,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, April 9th, 1876.

"Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who is on the LORD'S side? let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him."—Exodus xxxii. 26.

THOSE idolatrous people seem to have been awestruck by the appearance of Moses in their midst. You can picture them gathered around Aaron, worshipping the golden calf, and performing their unclean rites; but, as soon as ever Moses marches into the camp, they recognize his commanding presence and his kingly authority. "Drag down that abomination," he cries; "and break it in pieces;" and though, just now, they were adoring it, they implicitly obey him. The calf is hurled from its pedestal, burnt in the fire, ground to powder, and mingled with the water that the idolaters drank. Then rings out the grand challenge of our text. The brave man, who seems to stand like a solid rock amid the raging billows, feels it necessary to strike a decisive blow for Jehovah, and once for all to put an end to that shameful idolatry; so, taking his stand, as though to lift up the banner of Jehovah, he cries, "Who is on the Lord's side? let him come unto me; and all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him;"—the men who afterwards became the priests of the Most High God. Then came that just but terrible command to execute the idolaters, and three thousand of the people perished as a warning to the rest, and that cursed image-worship was stamped out of the camp; at least, for a time.

Now, dear friends, very much as Moses did, on that occasion, needs to be done very frequently in every age. It is needful that a banner should be displayed because of the truth, and that men should be called out, to rally around it; and those, who do so, those who are the most fearless and the most faithful, shall receive a great reward, even as we read, in the Book of Deuteronomy, that Moses bestowed a special blessing upon the tribe of Levi because its sons were faithful in that trying and testing time: "And of

Levi he said, Let thy Thummim and thy Urim be with thy holy one, whom thou didst prove at Massah, and with whom thou didst strive at the waters of Meribah; who said unto his father and to his mother, I have not seen him; neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own children: for they have observed thy word, and kept thy covenant." Blessed are they also, who, in these days, bow not down before the modern idols that so many worship,—blessed are the brave men who never question whether a certain course will "pay" or not, but who do the right thing, whatever the consequences of their action may be. These are they who, amidst the bright ones in heaven, shall be doubly bright; and who, here below, shall be the officers in the army of the Lord, who shall be called to lead the way in the day of battle. I would that we had many, among us, who would come forward with brave decision, and yield themselves up, without doubt or fear, to follow wherever the God of truth and the truth of God should lead them. High shall be their renown, and great shall be their reward, even as it was with these courageous sons of Levi who so promptly responded to the challenge of Moses, "Who is on the Lord's side? let him come unto me."

What I am going to try to do is, first, *to describe the conflict, and show which is the Lord's side;* secondly, *to point out to the Lord's followers what they must do;* thirdly, *to remind the Lord's hosts of their encouragements;* and, fourthly, *to repeat the question of the text, and to put forward proposals for enlistment in the army of the Lord.*

I. First, then, I have TO DESCRIBE THE CONFLICT WHICH IS NOW GOING ON, AND TO SHOW YOU WHICH IS THE LORD'S SIDE. That is not a very difficult task, and the conscience of each one of you ought to help me in its accomplishment.

This is where "the Lord's side" begins,—*Belief in God against Atheism and other forms of unbelief.* Infidelity assumes many forms,—the doubt as to whether there is any God at all;—the daring defiance of God, if there be a God;—or the indifference, which utterly neglects God, not caring about him either one way or another. Believers are on the opposite side to all of these, and you know that the side they are on is "the Lord's side." To fear him, to reverence him, to trust him, to love him, to serve him, to worship him,—that is being on "the Lord's side." On which side are you, dear friend? Are you a believer, a fearer, a truster, a lover, a worshipper of God; or are you a neglecter, a rejecter, a hater of him?

Here again are two sides; *obedience to the commands of God, or a determination to please ourselves.* Are we endeavouring to obey the moral law, or are we pouring contempt upon that law, and seeking to be happy by having our own way? How is it with you, my dear friend? Are you making yourself into your only god? Are you allowing your own lusts and passions to be the supreme governing influence over you? Are you saying to yourself, "I will have my own way; I will do as I please; so long as I can make myself merry, I care nothing whatever about the commands of

God"? If that is the way you talk, it is quite clear on which side you are. Between the will of the flesh and the will of God, there is no possible question as to which is "the Lord's side."

Here is another battle-ground; *Christ and his righteousness, or your self-righteousness;*—cleansing in Christ's blood, and covering with his perfect righteousness, on the one hand; and, on the other, salvation by your own works, salvation by your own prayers, salvation by your almsgiving, or by anything of your own. You know, at once, which is "the Lord's side" out of those two, for the Lord is always on Christ's side; indeed, Christ himself is God. Justification by faith is the side on which God is; but justification by the works of the law is a lie; in fact, it is an impossibility. Now, dear friends, on which side are you with regard to this matter of salvation by Christ or salvation by self? Are you "on the Lord's side" of that question.

Here is yet another point from which to view this great conflict; *the gospel of the grace of God, or the superstitions and falsehoods of men.* The Bible teaches us that sinners are saved by believing in Jesus Christ; but superstition says, "No, they are saved by being sprinkled with water, through the subtle influences that trickle from priestly fingers; they are saved by baptism, saved by sacraments. Here, then, is a sharp conflict between salvation by Christ and salvation by priests. We know which is "the Lord's side" of that controversy; but, dear friend, on which side are you? Do you go direct to the Lord Jesus Christ as your great High Priest, and do you trust alone to the merit of his atoning sacrifice; or will you go crouching to your fellow-creature, and pour into his ear the infamous story of your sin, and so defile him even more than he is already; and, then, will you come back deluded with the false notion that you have obtained "absolution" at his hands? We know that none can forgive sins save God alone; this is the Lord's way of making reconciliation through the blood of Jesus Christ his Son; so, friends, are you for Zion or for Rome? Are you on the side of Christ or on the side of antichrist?

There is a fierce battle, still raging in the world, *between Scripture and tradition,*—between this Grand Old Book and certain things which have been handed down, by tradition, from the fathers. They are said to be customs of the early church, or to have been ordained by various councils, or decreed by infallible popes. Well, dear friends, are you on the side of God's Word or of man's word? Is your rule of life, "Thus saith the Lord," or "Thus say the fathers," or "Thus say the councils," or "Thus say the popes"? "Who is on the Lord's side" in this matter? There is a stern fight still to be fought over this question; the battle has long been raging, and it will continue to rage until the victory is won by the truth of God. I am looking forward to the time when there will be only two parties left to fight,—the men who will have this text emblazoned on their standards, "One Lord, one faith, one baptism," and who will have nothing but the Bible for their rule of conduct,—and those bearing the other banner in praise of the inventions of men and the traditions of the fathers. They will cling to their errors,

I have no doubt, as long as they can; but the Lamb will overcome them, and they who are on "the Lord's side" will also come off more than conquerors through him that hath loved them.

There are also two sides to all the moral questions in the world. There is holiness, for instance; you all know on whose side that is; and there is unholiness, and you have no difficulty in deciding on whose side that is. Then, as to order, peace, quietness, love, generosity, and so on; you all know on whose side they are; and you equally know on whose side disorder, strife, disaffection, tumult, selfishness, and covetousness are. You are well aware, brethren, that wherever there is anything that is right, true, pure, holy, and of good report, that is "the Lord's side." Wherefore, always be on that side. But if there is anything that is impure, unchaste, unlovely, unjust, that is not "the Lord's side", and it should not be his people's side. At the present time, this dear land of ours seems as if it were going to be swallowed up by the demon of drunkenness. Temperance, righteousness, sobriety,—these are all on "the Lord's side" of that question, so let every Christian see that he takes the same side as the Lord does. I need not go into all the questions that are prominent at the present time, because they keep on changing their positions; and sometimes it is one question that is most prominent and sometimes another; but to almost every question which comes up, there is "the Lord's side" and there is another side, and the question must always be asked, "Which is the Lord's side?" and I trust, as soon as that question is answered, you will say, "That is the side for me to take,—the side upon which the Lord is."

II. Now, secondly, I am TO POINT OUT TO THE LORD'S FOLLOWERS WHAT THEY MUST DO TO SHOW THAT THEY ARE ON HIS SIDE.

And the first thing is, *they must own it.* The truth of God deserves to have bold adherents and brave proclaimers. Righteousness ought not to be claimed as the portion of men who are ashamed to own it. Suppose that those sons of Levi had slunk away to their tents, and had said, "Oh, yes; we are on the Lord's side; but we do not mean to expose ourselves to any risk in dealing with these idolaters." That would have been like the craven spirit of a soldier who shirks his proper place on the field of battle. He is too modest, too retiring to fight; that is only another way of saying that he is a coward, and unworthy of the uniform he wears. In like manner, it is a mean, beggarly spirit that will not lay down life and limb, substance and honour, and everything else that one has, for the cause of God and truth. Oh, for more of the true spirit of chivalry amongst those who call Jesus their Lord and Master! It is a shame that they should ever blush to own his name; they might rather blush with shame to think that they have ever been ashamed of him. I count it nothing, brethren, to speak for the cause that everybody thinks to be good, or to float with the stream by agreeing with what the multitude reckons to be right. Every time-server can do that; but, to swim against the stream, to speak unpopular truth, to declare that which God has taught you, even though nobody else believes it, to beard the lion

in his den, to stand—like Athanasius,—against the whole world for God and for his Christ,—this is being a man indeed; nay, more, this is being a Christian; and the time shall come when this shall be reckoned the noblest kind of man whom even God himself has made. So, if you are on God's side, own it.

Then, next, *rally to the standard*. Moses cried, "Who is on the Lord's side? let him come unto me." If you are a Christian, you should unite with other Christians. I believe, brethren and sisters, that it is the duty of all converts to test the various sections of the professing church by the Word of God, and then to cast in their lot with that part which holds the truth most fully and clearly; and, having conscientiously done that, to rally with the hosts of God in the great battle against wrong. Oh, you converts, who have never joined the church, what are you at? I beseech you, think over this matter, pray over it, and remember that, in the olden times, they first gave themselves unto the Lord, and afterwards they gave themselves unto his people, according to the will of God; and so ought you to do. Believers ought not to be solitary stones, lying by themselves; they should be built up into "a holy temple in the Lord, . . . builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit." So, dear friends, if you are on "the Lord's side", own it, and join with those who also are on that side.

Then, next, if you are on "the Lord's side", *be willing to be in a minority*. It is true that minorities have generally come in for kicks and blows, rather than kisses and caresses; but, at the great day of judgment, all such wrongs will be righted. And, after all, it has often been a minority,—ay, and even a minority of one,—that has done great things for God, after all. Just now, I mentioned Athanasius. You remember that, when the whole of Christendom seemed to swing round to Arianism, it was Athanasius, standing alone, "*Athanasius contra mundum*," as he truly said, who brought the Church back to belief in the Deity of Christ. And in the days of Luther, who can ever tell what a pivot and hinge that one lone man was for Germany and Europe? And in Scotland, what force there was in the one brave man, John Knox, whose preaching and prayers Queen Mary feared more than an army of soldiers! Few followed these brave leaders at the first, for following meant the stake, the scaffold, the prison, suffering, shame, reproach, and death; yet these were the men and women who did the true work of God, after all, and who fought the good fight of faith. Be ye followers of them; run not with the multitude to do evil; rather choose the narrow way, that leadeth unto life, though few there be that find it. From the days of Noah, the followers of the Lord have usually been in the minority. If the rightness of any course could be decided by the counting of heads, the devil would mostly be in the right; but we do not reckon in that way. We test every question by the Word of God, not by the votes of men. If the Lord has said anything, believe it, even if no one else does. If the Lord has revealed any truth to your conscience, hold to it, even though, to all others, it should seem to be a lie; and, verily, I say unto you, you shall have your reward. The sons of Levi were

in a minority, in comparison with the great host of idolaters in the camp of Israel, yet they came out boldly for the Lord, and are, therefore, held in honour even to this day.

Further, *you must be aggressive* if you are on "the Lord's side." These sons of Levi, directly they declared that they were on the side of Jehovah, had to come forth to smite and slay his enemies. So must you, if you are a follower of the Lord. There is nothing that the devil likes better than to be let alone. I am often asked, "Why do you not preach what you believe, and leave other people's doctrine alone?" Ah, just so! Why don't I? And why did not the Lord Jesus Christ let the devil alone, and let false teachers alone; and why does not the gospel let error and falsehood alone? When the Lord Jesus Christ came into the world, one part of his work was to destroy the works of the devil. The demons said to him, "Let us alone: what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? Art thou come to destroy us?" His answer was, "Hold thy peace, and come out of him;" and when the demons say to us, "Let us alone," we reply, "That is the very thing that we cannot do, and that we dare not do." We must not let falsehood, and sin, and error alone. Christ himself said, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword." His faithful servants are to follow his example, to quarrel with error, to fight against sin, to be aggressive against everything that is opposed to our Lord and his truth. The devil is quite ready to make a league of peace with us, or to agree to a truce, and say, "Now, do not go on fighting any longer. Let us shake hands, and be friends. There can be no reason why I should not continue to be the prince of the power of the air, and Christ should also have his disciples; only let them be very decorous and quiet, and mind their own business." But we will make no such wicked league or truce as that, for we are to resist the devil; as Peter writes, "whom resist steadfast in the faith." The sons of Levi had to smite the adversaries of God, and so must you who are on "the Lord's side."

You must also *let love to God overmaster all nature's ties* if you are on "the Lord's side." Moses expressly commended Levi for this: "Who said unto his father and to his mother, I have not seen him; neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own children." They were so jealous for the Lord of hosts, that they would not tolerate idolatry in their nearest kith and kin. Happily, brethren, we have not to fight anybody with a sword of steel. God forbid that any of us should ever take the life of a fellow-creature! Our one weapon is the two-edged sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God; the force we use is the force of the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. But, I charge you, never do a wrong thing, or even a questionable thing, in order to please father, or mother, or wife, or child; and never allow any wrong to go unrebuked in the dearest friend you have, for "faithful are the wounds of a friend." Some have condoned sin to please a wife or a husband; but they who are faithful to God must also be faithful to the members of their own household. This may involve persecution for themselves; but they must be willing to bear it, for Christ's sake, and

they must not yield an inch, or an iota, in any matter of principle, or any question of truth and right, even to the beloved of their heart. Can you do this? If so, you are worthy to be reckoned among those who are on "the Lord's side."

Once more, they who are on "the Lord's side" *must do as they are bidden.* They must be prepared to obey all Christ's commands, to the letter, and also in the spirit of them, right to the end of life. I am ashamed of the way in which some professing Christians ignore so much of the Bible, shutting their eyes to Christ's commands, or, like Nelson, turning their blind eye to those they don't wish to read. Finding themselves in a certain community, they believe what the community believes, without ever testing it, and trying it, by the Word of God. They do not want to know too much; and if anybody tries to teach them a truth which they do not know, they are unwilling to learn it, lest it should unsettle them in their ecclesiastical position. I bless God that, when I was converted to Christ, I laid down this rule for myself,—"Whatever the Lord teaches me, in his Word, I will follow. If it should lead me into a path where I shall be quite alone, because I can find nobody to believe as I believe, yet will I believe and teach that which the Holy Spirit reveals to me in the Word." At this moment, I have not an atom of respect for any authority, in matters relating to divine truth, except the authority of God; and I would strongly urge all young people to try all catechisms, creeds, customs, doctrines, practices, and everything else, by that infallible test: "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."

III. Thirdly, I am to remind THE LORD'S HOSTS OF THEIR ENCOURAGEMENTS.

First, we may be encouraged to be on "the Lord's side" *because it is the cause of right and truth.* To me, it seems to be a sufficient reward to a man to know that he is defending a right cause even if he has to die for it. Do you crave the applause of human hands and voices? Do you covet the glance of approving eyes? If so, your self-respect has already fallen below the point which it ought to mark. Are you right in the course you are now pursuing? If you are, you need not ask for anything more. To be right, and yet to be poor;—to be right, and to be abused, or even to be put to death;—is, surely, sufficient for any follower of the Lord.

Better still, if there can be any better, remember that *you are on God's side.* He, who is almighty, looks upon you as his friend; or, rather, say that he, who is almighty, is your Friend. He is much more than that, for he is your All-in-all. You may shelter yourself beneath his wings. Behind the bosses of his buckler, you may hide yourself in perfect security.

Moreover, *Jesus the Crucified is with you,* if you are on "the Lord's side." There he stands, whose head was crowned with the cruel thorns, and whose hands and feet were pierced by the terrible nails. Blessed is every soldier of the cross, for he hath Christ for his Captain; and where his pennon waves, victory must surely come.

Further, my brethren and sisters in Christ, *all the saints of God*

are with us;—the countless hosts of the redeemed, before the throne of God above, are all on his side, and ours; and so are *all the holy angels*, "that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his Word." All the unfallen intelligences in the universe are on "the Lord's side." Therefore, let us not be afraid, who are enrolled beneath the banner of the cross; and let others cast in their lot with us; for, thus, they will be siding with a noble host that has gone on before us. The lineage of the saints of God is a very high one. Talk of the blood royal or imperial;—bah! a single drop of the blood of the martyrs, flowing through our veins, is far more to be desired. To walk as they walked, "of whom the world was not worthy,"—those first confessors of the faith, who "wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented;"—this is to be a member of the blood royal of heaven, the highest nobility that can be gained in this world. How many of you, young men and young women, or older men and women, are ready to say, "We are on the Lord's side"? The air all around us is crowded with the spirits of just men made perfect. They are watching to see how we run the Christian race, and wrestle for the prize of our high calling in Christ Jesus; and they sing a new song of praise unto the Lord as he leads one and another to contend earnestly for the faith once for all delivered to the saints, to stand out boldly for Christ and him crucified, and to speak, or serve, or suffer, as best shall glorify the Lord Most High.

IV. Time and strength both fail me, so I cannot say more upon that point, though much more might be said. I am, in closing my discourse, TO REPEAT THE QUESTION OF THE TEXT, AND TO MAKE PROPOSALS FOR ENLISTMENT IN THE ARMY OF THE LORD. I should like to act as a recruiting sergeant, and to enlist some new soldiers for King Jesus.

"Who is on the Lord's side?" "Well," says one, "I wish to be." Well, I will gladly help you to enlist. You know what the sergeant does when he enlists a young man; the first thing he does is to give him something,—a shilling; and if you intend to be a follower of the Lord, *you must receive something;* or, rather, you must receive Someone, even the Lord Jesus Christ, for "as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." You cannot be on "the Lord's side" unless you receive the Lord's Christ as your Saviour; but as soon as you accept him as the free gift of Jehovah's free grace, you are enlisted into the army of the Lord. Will you take him on those terms? Will you have the Lord Jesus Christ as your Captain? I pray his gracious Spirit to make you say, "Ay, that I will, by his grace."

Next, the sergeant puts the ribbons in the young man's hat; and, if you receive Christ, the next thing you have to do is *to confess Christ openly by being baptized.* Our Captain's own words, as recorded in the Gospel according to Mark, are these, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved;" and what he has joined together, no one has the right to put asunder. So, get the colours in your hat, young recruit, if you really are enlisted on "the Lord's side."

When you have done that, the next thing for us to do is to *take you off to the barracks, and drill you.* You will not be fully fitted to fight the Lord's battles until you have been drilled and trained by your new officers. So, submit yourself to the discipline of the Church of Christ. Be willing to take your place in the ranks with your brethren, to follow the New Testament church order, to be taught what are the first principles of the Christian faith, and to be instructed yet further in the things of God, so that, afterwards, you may be able, in your turn, to instruct others. Christ's commission runs thus, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach (make disciples of) all nations, baptizing them (those who are made disciples) in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." So, you see, we are to teach before we baptize, and afterwards still further to teach those who have been made disciples, and who have been baptized into the triune name of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

Then, we shall want you to *put on your full regimentals.* What are the regimentals of a Christian? The garments of holiness, the livery of love, and the whole armour of God. We pray the Lord to clothe you, from head to foot, in the divine panoply wherein all the warriors of the cross should be arrayed;—the girdle of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shoes of the gospel of peace, the shield of faith, "the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God." There is nothing like having your Bible always with you, and being able to turn to any passage that you need when you are confronting the foe; for "It is written" is a wondrous weapon against the devil, as Christ himself proved. Satan flies from this sharp sword, and other adversaries of the Lord, and his people, feel the force of the Word when they will not yield to anything else.

Then, when you are fully armed, and drilled, and trained, *we shall expect you to wage war for King Jesus;* and the first war must be a civil war,—war within your own soul,—war to the bitter end against every sin, every evil habit, every false word. All iniquity must be driven out of your spirit, at the point of the bayonet, and no quarter must be given to any enemy of the Most High God. Then, even while the civil war is raging, we shall want you to carry the war into the enemy's territory. Attack the foe on all sides,—speak to your friends about Christ,—so live that they will see Christ's life reproduced in you, at least in a measure;—plead with those with whom you work or live,—the servants in the house, or your companions, all sorts and conditions of men,—tell them all about Jesus Christ. If we were once to have a church fully awakened, and zealous for Christ and his truth, we should soon have the persecuting times back again. The early Christian church was very enthusiastic; they went everywhere preaching the Word. Somebody says, "Ah! they lived in the days of persecution." But it was not the persecution which made them enthusiastic; it was their enthusiasm that brought upon them persecution for Christ's

sake; and, probably, if we were as good Christians as we ought to be, we should not be half as well liked by the world as we now are; and if there was more noise and opposition made against the followers of Christ, it would not be at all a bad sign. If those, who hate righteousness, hated Christians more heartily than they now do, it might be a token that God was more manifestly at work in us, making us more "out-and-out" for him than we are at present.

Now, then, you who are on "the Lord's side" in this congregation, —you who really believe in Jesus,—I invite all of you to confess your faith in him if you have not already done so. Nay, more than that, in the name of Jesus, in whom you believe, I exhort and command you to confess your faith in him. Be not ashamed to avow your convictions; do not try to conceal yourselves from your fellow-Christians. Come out, and come out soon; and may the numbers of this church, or of some other church, be greatly swollen by the addition of those who are truly upon "the Lord's side." I wish I could persuade some of you not to put off this confession any longer, but to say, "I love my Saviour, and I mean to come out, and confess that I am on 'the Lord's side.' I have been far too long hesitating, and halting between two opinions; but I will not let another week go by without saying, as plainly as words can say it, 'I have given myself to Christ, and now I wish to give myself to his Church.'" May God bless you all for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

EXODUS XXXII. 1—29.

Verse 1. *And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.*

They wanted something to look at,—something visible that they could adore. It was not that they meant to cease to worship Jehovah, but they intended to worship him under some tangible symbol. That is the great fault of Ritualists and Romanists; they aim at worshipping God, but they must do so through some sign, some symbol, some cross, some crucifix, or something or other that they can see.

2, 3. *And Aaron said unto them, Break off the golden earrings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them unto me. And all the people brake off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them unto Aaron.*

People are often very generous in their support of a false religion; and, to make idol gods, they will sacrifice their most precious treasures, as these idolaters willingly gave their golden ear-rings.

4. *And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.*

No doubt they copied the Egyptian god, which was in the form of a bull, which the Holy Spirit, by the pen of Moses, here calls a calf. The psalmist probably also alludes to it when he speaks of "an ox or a bullock that hath horns and hoofs." It seems strange that these people should have thought of worshipping the living God under such a symbol as that.

5. *And when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation, and said, To morrow is a feast to the* LORD.

"To Jehovah." They intended to worship Jehovah under the form of a bull—the image of strength. Other idolaters go further, and worship Baal and various false gods; but, between the worship of a golden calf and the worship of false gods, there is very little choice; and, between the idolatry of the heathen and Popery, there is about as much difference as there is between six and half a dozen.

6. *And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.*

It was usual to worship false gods with music and dancing, and with orgies of drunkenness and obscene rites, and the Israelites fell into the same evils as they had seen among their neighbours.

7. *And the* LORD *said unto Moses,—*

Just in the midst of his hallowed communion, the Lord said to him:—

7. *Go, get thee down; for thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves:*

God would not own them as his people. He called them Moses' people: "*thy* people, which *thou* broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves."

8—10. *They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And the* LORD *said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people: now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation.*

For Moses began at once to pray for the people,—to interpose between God and the execution of his righteous wrath; and, therefore, the Lord said to him, "Let me alone, . . . that I may consume them."

11. *And Moses besought the* LORD *his God, and said,* LORD, *why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people,—*

See how he dares even to say to God, "They are *thy* people, though they have acted so wickedly. 'Why doth thy wrath wax hot against *thy* people,'"—

11—13. *Which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand? Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it for ever.*

Moses pleaded the covenant which the Lord had made with Abraham, Isaac, and Israel; and there is no plea like that. Although it might have been to his own personal interest that the people should be destroyed, Moses would not have it so; and he pleaded with God, for the sake of his own honour, his faithfulness, and his truth, not to run back from the word which he had spoken.

14, 15. *And the* LORD *repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people. And Moses turned, and went down from the mount,*

Does it not seem sad for Moses to have to go down from the immediate presence of God, and to stand among the idolatrous and rebellious people in the camp? Yet that is often the lot of those whom God employs as his

servants. They have, as it were, to come down from heaven to fight with hell upon earth.

15—17. *And the two tables of the testimony were in his hand: the tables were written on both their sides; on the one side and on the other were they written. And the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables. And when Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said unto Moses, There is a noise of war in the camp.*

For Joshua was a younger man than Moses, and also a soldier, so his ear was quicker to hear what he took to be "a noise of war in the camp."

18. *And he said, It is not the voice of them that shout for mastery, neither is it the voice of them that cry for being overcome: but the noise of them that sing do I hear.*

Moses knew that it was not a battle-cry either of the victors or the vanquished; but the song of idolatrous worshippers.

19. *And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing: and Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount.*

In righteous indignation, preserving those sacred tablets from the profane touch of the polluted people, by dashing them to fragments in his holy anger.

20. *And he took the calf which they had made, and burnt it in the fire, and ground it to powder, and strawed it upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink of it.*

Think of the courage of this one man, to go singlehanded right into the middle of the idolaters' camp, and deal thus with their precious god!

21—24. *And Moses said unto Aaron, What did this people unto thee, that thou hast brought so great a sin upon them? And Aaron said, Let not the anger of my lord wax hot: thou knowest the people, that they are set on mischief. For they said unto me, Make us gods, which shall go before us: for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. And I said unto them, Whosoever hath any gold, let them break it off. So they gave it me: then I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf.*

Which was a lie. Aaron was a poor weak-minded creature, easily persuaded to do wrong; and when his stronger-minded and more gracious brother was absent, he became the willing tool of the idolatrous people; and yet Aaron is called, by the psalmist, "the saint of the Lord;" and so he was, taking him as a whole. One black spot, on the face of a fair man, does not prove him to be a negro; and so, one sin, in the life of a man who is usually holy, does not put him among the ungodly.

25—28. *And when Moses saw that the people were naked; (for Aaron had made them naked unto their shame among their enemies:) then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who is on the LORD'S side? let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him. And he said unto them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour. And the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses:*

The rebellious, the idolatrous, the men who had defied the authority of God, were to be summarily executed on the spot.

28, 29. *And there fell of the people that day about three thousand men. For Moses had said, Consecrate yourselves to day to the LORD, even every man upon his son, and upon his brother; that he may bestow upon you a blessing this day.*

Such a colossal crime as that must be expiated before the Lord could again bless the chosen race.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

CHRIST'S SYMPATHY WITH HIS PEOPLE.

A Sermon

PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MAY 26TH, 1904,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On a Lord's-day Evening, during the winter of 1861—2.

"For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted."—Hebrews ii. 18.

THAT which is the most simple lesson the gospel has to teach, is often the most difficult lesson for the Christian to learn. That simple lesson is, that we must not look to ourselves for anything good, but that we must look to the Lord alone for all our righteousness. The lesson is short, as well as simple; it is easy to repeat; but, as often as our faith is severely tried, we find how apt we are to forget that which is the very Alpha of the gospel, its rudiments,—That man, in himself, is wholly lost, and that all his hope of help and salvation must rest on Christ;—that, apart from God, there is nothing upon which faith can fasten itself;—and that, without the atoning sacrifice and justifying righteousness of Christ, the quickening and sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, and the everlasting love of the Father, there is neither joy, nor peace, nor comfort, nor hope to be found anywhere. This seems to be a very easy lesson; yet even aged believers, when their hair is getting grey, and they are about to enter the land of perfect peace and rest, still find the temptation to unbelief too much for them, and they begin to look for something good in the creature, and to seek for happiness in themselves, instead of seeking all good in God.

I want to try to teach you this lesson again, and also to learn it myself, for I need to learn it as much as you do,—the lesson of looking away from our temptations, and from our own weakness and inability to repel those temptations, to him who, having himself suffered being tempted, "is able to succour them that are tempted." Let us fix our eye upon our great High Priest, and leave Satan and all his insinuations, his blasphemies and his temptations, out of the question. Or, rather, let us bring them to Christ, and see them all finished in him. I am going to address three separate characters that are represented here,—first, *the confirmed believer;* secondly,

the young beginner; and, thirdly, *the backslider;* and then, summoning the attention of *the whole company here assembled*, I shall try to commend the comfort and instruction of the text to you all.

I. First, let me speak to ADVANCED CHRISTIANS.

You all have your trials, and those trials are of an advanced character. The troubles, with which the plants of God's right-hand planting are assailed, when they are saplings, are quite inconsiderable compared with those which come upon them when they are like cedars firmly rooted. As surely as our strength increases, so will our sufferings, our trials, our labours, or our temptations. God's power is never given to a man to be stored up unused. The heavenly food, that is sent to strengthen us, like the manna given to the Israelites in the wilderness, is intended for immediate use. If the Lord sends you much, you shall have nothing beyond what you can use for him; though, blessed be his holy name, if you have but little, you shall have no lack. When the Lord puts upon our feet the shoes of iron and brass, which he has promised us in his ancient covenant, he intends that we should wear them, and walk in them,—not that we should put them into our museum, and gaze upon them as curiosities. If he gives us a strong hand, it is because we have a strong foe to fight with. If he gives us a great meal,—like that which he gave to Elijah,—it is in order that, in the strength of that meal, we may go for forty days, or even longer.

Perhaps, my brother or sister, you are, just now, in great trouble. You have grown in grace, and your troubles have also grown. You feel that you want someone to whom you can tell your trouble; —your trouble very likely arises from the absence of your Lord. Let me remind you that, in this respect, you are very like the Israelites in the wilderness, when Moses had been absent from them for forty days. They said, "What shall we do? Our leader is gone; he, who was king in Jeshurun, has departed from us, and we are left like sheep without a shepherd." So they went—I dare not say that they went for counsel, but they went—to the high priest, and you remember what they said, and what he did. Alas! he gave them no good counsel, for he was as unwise as they were, and as untried; he had always had Moses by his side ever since the day that the Lord had said, "Is not Aaron the Levite thy brother? . . . He shall be to thee instead of a mouth, and thou shalt be to him instead of God." Aaron had never been left without his great leader; so, in his absence, he miserably failed, and led the people in the making and worshipping of the golden calf. How different it will be with you, who mourn the loss of the light of your Lord's countenance, if you go to our great High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ! He knows the meaning of your present trial, for he had once to cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" You tell him that your "soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death," and he tells you that it was so with him also, on that night in which he was betrayed, when, "being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." No untried priest is he; he can sympathize, and he can succour.

Take another case, that of Hannah, the "woman of a sorrowful spirit." She was in a peculiarly trying position. Her husband's other wife had children, but she had none; though she was greatly beloved of her husband, her adversary vexed her sorely to make her fret. Day by day, this was thrown in her teeth, that, because of some sin, God had not granted her the desire of her heart. A trial in one's own house is one of the saddest places where it can come; the saddest, perhaps, with the exception of a thorn in the flesh, which comes still closer home. So poor Hannah, having that trial at home, thought she would go up to the sanctuary in Shiloh. There, she "prayed unto the Lord, and wept sore, and she vowed a vow." But "she spake in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard." So Eli, the high priest, thought that she was drunken; and, instead of comforting and consoling her, he spoke harshly to her, depressed and broken as her spirit was. You, my brethren, and you, my sisters, too, may have some trouble which you dare not tell to another, though it is sorely vexing you, and threatens even to break your heart. But when you go to the great High Priest, he will understand all about you, he will not need you to explain your sorrow to him, for he knows exactly what it is, and he will apply the healing balm to your sorrowful spirit, and send you on your way full of peace and comfort.

I offer, then, to you, who are advanced believers, this very comforting reflection,—*in Christ's sufferings, you are quite certain to find something akin to your own;* and, in Christ's heart, you are quite sure to find a deep well of divine sympathy; so you need not hesitate to go to him, or doubt that his loving heart will overflow with sympathy towards you, whatever your trial may be.

But, more than that, while I would console you by reminding you that Christ has suffered even as you have, I would also comfort you with the reflection that, *this very day, he still suffers with you.* Suppose, now, that a man could be so high in stature that his head could be in heaven while his feet were on earth, yet, whenever his feet suffered, his head would suffer, too. In the Canticles, the spouse says of her Heavenly Bridegroom, "His head is as the most fine gold, . . . his legs are as pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold." As John saw him, "in the isle that is called Patmos," "his eyes were as a flame of fire; and his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace." This suggests to me a parable; the feet of Christ, which form His Church on earth, still glow "as if they burned in a furnace." The glorious Head of the Church, up in heaven, "is as the most fine gold;" but there is not the least glow of heat, in the feet on earth, which is not felt by the Head in heaven. There is not a pang, that rends your heart, which Jesus does not feel. There is not a sorrow, that cuts deeply into your soul, which does not also cut into his; so you can still sing,—

> "He feels at his heart all our sighs and our groans
> For we are most near him, his flesh and his bones;
> In all our distresses our Head feels the pain,
> They all are most needful, not one is in vain."

Does it not comfort you to know that Christ can sympathize with you, and that he must sympathize with you;—*can*, because he has suffered; *must*, because he suffers still?

I may also add, for your comfort, that *all this*—Christ's suffering as you do, and his suffering with you,—*must tend to shield you in your trials.* A country minister, preaching upon the text, "Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there?" made the remark that Christ is a good Physician. "Ah!" said he, "Christ is not like those doctors, who come and say they are sorry for you, whereas, in their hearts, they are glad you are ill; for, if you and others were not ill, there would be no work for them. Or else," said the preacher, "they look down upon you, and pity you, but not half as much as if they themselves had your complaint, and felt all the pains that you are feeling. But suppose," he added, "that the doctor had all your pains himself,—suppose you had the headache, and that he looked down on you, and had your headache;—suppose, when you had palpitation of the heart, he had palpitation of the heart, too;—why, he would be very quick to cure you; certainly, he would not let you lie there a moment longer than was necessary, because he himself would be suffering with you." Now, there is just one objection that may be made to the countryman's argument, —that is, that the physician might be willing to raise the patient up at once, because he was himself suffering with him; yet he might say, "Here are two of us in the same plight, but my skill fails me here. If I could deliver you, you can well imagine that I would gladly do so, for, in so doing, I should deliver myself as well; but, alas! it is beyond my power, I cannot lighten your burden, nor my own; we can only sit down together, and mingle our tears, but we cannot assist one another."

But it is not so with the good Physician, for he has both the will and the power to heal us. One motion of that eternal arm, and every cloud, that is wrapped about the sky, shall be folded up, like a worn-out vesture, and cast away. Jesus speaks, and the boisterous billows cease their raging, and the wild winds are hushed to sleep. "Let there be light," saith he; and, over the thick darkness of our affliction and adversity, comes the bright gleam of joy and prosperity He did but lift up his voice, and "kings of armies did flee apace." O Jesus, our Lord, when thou comest forth for the deliverance of thy people, who can stand before thee? As the wax melteth before the fire, and as the fat of rams is consumed upon thine altar, so do our trials and troubles melt and vanish away when thou comest forth for the deliverance of thy people! Remember, believers, that you not only have the love of Christ's heart, but you also have the strength of Christ's arm at your disposal. He ruleth over all things, in heaven, and earth, and hell, so rest in him, for still he bears the scars of his wounds to show that he has suffered even as you do. Still doth he prove himself to be man, seeing that he suffers with you; yet is he also "very God of very God," into whose hand all power in heaven and earth is committed. He can, he must, he will deliver his people, and bring them out of all their trials into his eternal kingdom and glory.

II. Secondly, I am going to speak TO ANXIOUS ENQUIRERS AND YOUNG BEGINNERS.

I hear a plaintive voice, over yonder, saying to me, "I know, sir, that the precious blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin; and I know that, the moment I believe in him, I have nothing to fear concerning the past, for that sin is blotted out, once for all; but my fear is that, if I commence a Christian life, it will not last long. I am afraid I shall be like Pliable, and turn back at the Slough of Despond; or if my neighbours jeer at me, I fear that I shall be ashamed to go forward in spite of their opposition. Even if I get over that, I feel that I cannot trust my own evil heart, which is so apt to deceive me. If old temptations should be overcome, new ones will be sure to arise, and I cannot help fearing as to what will become of me. I have seen some, who made a fair show in the flesh, turn back, and go straight to perdition; and I tremble lest it should be so with me also. How can I hope to withstand the imperious lusts which were too strong for me when first they allured my simple heart? How much more shall they be too mighty for me now that sin has gathered the force of habit, and practice, like an iron net, has enfolded me in its cruel grip! When I was a youth, I could not stand against this great enemy of my soul; how, then, shall I be a match for him now that I have grown old and feeble? The old Adam will be too strong for the young Melancthon."

Well, dear friends, I have seen some persons, who have been truly converted to God, who have been greatly troubled with this fear. Indeed, in some instances, I have even known of poor men kneeling down, and praying that God would let them die, there and then, sooner than that they should live to prove that their feelings were only a delusion, and that their supposed repentance was merely a passing excitement. Some of us can fully sympathize with those who pray such a prayer as that, for we have often felt that the most terrible death would be preferable to the disgrace of bringing dishonour upon the name of Jesus by turning back to the City of Destruction after we had once started for the Celestial City. But, my dear friend, if the Lord has begun a good work in thy soul, and led thee to trust in Jesus as thy Saviour, my text will just meet that fear of thine, for the apostle here says that Christ "is able to succour them that are tempted." You will be tempted;—I will not delude you with the notion that you will not;—and you cannot, by yourself, stand up against that temptation; but Christ, "in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, is able to succour them that are tempted." This truth we set before you as a shield against all these dark, mysterious thoughts;—Christ can, and he will, if you trust in him, protect you from the sin and the temptation which you rightly dread.

"But how is this to be done?" asks someone. Well, first of all, *Christ can do it by the force of his own example.* He can show you—as he has done in his Word; but he can show you, by his Spirit opening up that Word, how he was once subject to just the same temptation that now assails you. Are you poor, and are you tempted to use wrong means to get rich? Christ can tell you how,

in the wilderness, "when he had fasted forty days, and forty nights, he was afterwards an hungred," and Satan came to him, and said, "If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." Are you a man in a high position, and are you tempted to do some daring and reckless deed? Christ can remind you how, when he was on a pinnacle of the temple, Satan said to him, "If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down." Or do you seem, just now, to have great power within your reach if you will but stain your hand to grasp it? Christ can tell you how Satan showed him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, and said to him, "All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me." Then he will remind you how he passed through all these ordeals without sin, for the prince of this world could find nothing in him to respond to his temptations. He was tried and tested again and again, but no trace of alloy could be discovered even by the devil himself. Though he was often shot at by his great adversary, he was never wounded by the fiery shafts; so, inspired by his glorious example, you may say,—

"Through floods and flames, if Jesus lead
I'll follow where he goes."

You not only have Christ's example to keep you from sin, but you also have *his presence*. Do you know what this means? Let me give you an instance of it. There was a certain merchant, who had been, again and again, tempted to an act of sin. It was the usual custom in his trade, everybody else did it; but he knew that it was wrong, and his soul revolted against it. As he sat in his counting-house, he saw, pictured before his mind's eye, his wife homeless, and his children crying for bread; and the demon whispered to him, "Do it; do it." Then another picture flitted before his eyes,—he and his wife and children were rich, their home was filled with good things, and again the adversary said, "Do it; do it." He saw the advantages that were to be gained by doing it, but he went home, and pondered the whole matter. His soul was heavy, and a stern struggle was proceeding within him. Then he went to his chamber, and shut himself in alone, and, falling upon his knees, told out all his difficulty and temptations to his Father in heaven. Then, suddenly, not before his eyes, but to faith's inner eye, there appeared a vision of the crucified Christ, who showed him his pierced hands, and feet, and side, and then said to him, "He that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. Thou hast not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin." The merchant, fixing his tearful eyes upon his Saviour, remembered Paul's words, "Consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds;" he came down from his bedroom, his soul was glad, for his mind was made up, and he said to himself, "I will not do it; I can be poor, but I cannot sin." Others marked the man, and wondered at the change in his appearance. He walked erect, no longer like one bowed down beneath a heavy burden. Many men marvelled at him, and asked what had happened to him, but none could tell. The secret

was, that the crucified Christ had appeared to him, and had given him the support of his divine presence. That was sufficient to succour him in the time of temptation, for Christ, having himself suffered being tempted, was able to succour his faithful follower when he also was tempted.

I know that I am addressing someone, who says,—I will use, as far as possible, his own words,—"Look here, sir; I have always been in the habit of being a jolly fellow, meeting with a number of boon companions to drink, and chat, and sing, and so on. I do not know that we did very much amiss; but, still, I could not do it again if I became a Christian. Suppose, now, that I should be invited to join the same company to-morrow;—I am not sure what I might do, I might refuse their invitation;—but if I were asked again and again, and they jeered at me for refusing, I might give in. Suppose that I did not yield, there is another difficulty. I have been a man of such-and-such a character, and have formed such-and-such habits; now, how in the world am I to overcome those habits? How am I to become a Christian, and to continue so to the end?"

These are very proper questions, and I answer,—You are utterly helpless, apart from him who is able to succour them that are tempted; but if you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, he will give you a new nature. That new nature, it is true, will not at once cast out the old nature; your old nature will still be there, but the new nature will struggle against it; and, ultimately, through the effectual working of the Holy Spirit, the new nature will prevail over the old nature, and you will be "a new creature in Christ Jesus;" old things will have passed away, and all things will have become new. You will say, as a young convert did, when he came to join the church, "I don't know which it is, but either everything else is changed, or else I am." It was in himself, of course, that the great change had been wrought, but that changed the aspect of everything else.

Let me give you a little parable to illustrate this point. A lion and a tiger used, frequently, to roam the forests together, in search of prey that might satisfy their bloodthirsty appetites. But, one day, an angel came, touched the lion, and changed him into a lamb. The next day, the tiger came, and wanted the lion to go with him to his feast of blood. Do you think it was difficult for him to refuse the invitation? Oh, no! "I have no inclination to go," said he. The tiger laughed scornfully, and said, "Aha! you have become pious, have you? Now you will go to the sheepfolds, and sneak behind the shepherds' heels,—you that were once so brave!" And the tiger despised him, and said, "You are miserable to be thus tied up like a dog, and not to dare to come and do as we have always done." "Nay," said the lion, "it is not that I dare not go with you, but I have no wish to go. I am not miserable because I cannot go with you on such an errand,—I should be miserable if I did go. The fact is, I cannot now do what I once did, for I am not what I once was. My new nature has brought me new loves, new hatreds, new preferences, new pursuits, so I cannot go with you on your bloodthirsty expedition."

If God has wrought a similar change in you, and transformed the lion into a lamb, and the raven into a dove, it will not be difficult for you to be kept from sin, for you will hate sin with a perfect hatred, and have no fellowship with it; and, besides that, as your nature will be renewed, day by day, by the Holy Spirit, with a constant infusion of everything that is good, and gracious, and Godlike, do you not see that sin shall no longer be like a strong spear to pierce you, but as a fragile reed which shall snap against the armour of proof which your soul shall wear?

Let me remind you, who are thinking of going upon pilgrimage, but are afraid of the lions and the dragons in the way, that he, under whose banner you hope to enlist, never suffered one soldier, who was in his service, to perish. If you become a sheep under the care of the good Shepherd, remember that—

> "His honour is engaged to save
> The meanest of his sheep."

If you are a mariner, bound for the Fair Havens of eternal felicity, recollect that the Lord High Admiral of the seas of providence and grace has safely convoyed into port every vessel that has yet been committed to his charge; not one has ever been wrecked or lost in any way. Trust yourself to his protection and guidance, and he will bring you also in safely. What if your temper be, naturally, furious? What if your evil propensities have been indulged until they have become as giants holding you in cruel captivity? What if your passions boil, and burn, and blaze, like Vesuvius in eruption? What if your temptations should come upon you as the Philistines came upon Samson? He, to whom you commit the keeping of your soul, shall make you master over all; and you shall yet be, with the great multitude whom no man can number, more than conqueror through him who hath loved you. Oh, that the Holy Spirit would constrain many of you, straightway, to leave your old master, and to enter the service of the Saviour! You will never find a better master than the Lord Jesus Christ.

"Ah!" said a sailor, seventy years of age, who had heard a sermon that had deeply affected him, and, I trust, had been the means of renewing his nature, "I am going to haul down my old flag to-day. I have sailed under the colours of the Black Prince all these years, but they are coming down to-day; and I am going to run up the blood-red cross in their place, and I hope to sail under that flag until I die." So may it be with many of you! Say, "O Satan, we have served thee far too long! Miserable is thy service, despicable are thy ways, degrading is our position, and awful must be our end if we remain in thy power." Then turn to the Lord, and appeal to him. Say, "O God, help us! We cry to thee. Bring us, we pray thee, from under the tyrant's sway. Help us to yield ourselves up to thee this very hour. Take our hearts, black as they are, and wash them in the precious blood of Jesus Christ, thy well-beloved Son. Change the hearts of stone into hearts of flesh. Make us to be thy servants while we live, and to enter into thy rest and thy glory when we die."

I have thus, I hope, spoken somewhat to the comfort of young beginners and anxious enquirers.

III. Now, in the third place, I am going to speak briefly to BACKSLIDERS.

Where art thou, backslider? I cannot pick thee out; but there is an eye that sees thee, and that weeps over thee. Ten years ago, you used to sit down at the communion table; twenty years ago, you were a reputable member of the church; but you fell, and, oh, what a fall was yours! Since that time, you have not wholly forsaken the house of God, though you have wandered hither and thither; but you have never dared to call yourself a Christian again. You lost the light of God's countenance long ago; and you find the service of Satan very hard, yet you think you must go downward to despair. You feel that you are in the iron cage of which Bunyan wrote, and you fear that you will never get out of it. Poor backslider, I cannot mention thy name without a tear; and if I, a fellow-creature, thus weep over thee, much more does that compassionate Saviour, who suffered being tempted, and who is able to succour them that are tempted.

Hark! If you will but incline your ear, you may hear a note that will cheer your heart, and yet break it, too! 'Tis God who speaks, and he is having a controversy with himself over you. Justice says, "Destroy him;" but Mercy says, "Spare him." The very gospel, which thou hast despised, witnesses against thee; but, at the same time, pleads for thee. The Lord still says to backsliders, as he did to his ancient people when they wandered from him, "Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord; for I am married unto you." "Married unto you!" This marriage bond cannot be broken; thou hast played the harlot, and gone after many lovers; but thy first Husband hates putting away, and even now invites thee to return to him. So,—

> "To thy Father's bosom pressed,
> Once again a child confessed;
> From his house no more to roam,
> Come, O poor backslider, come!"

I may even be addressing some, who once drank from the cup of communion, but who have turned aside to drink the cup of devils. I may be speaking to some, to whom, for years, the Sabbath has been a day for business instead of a day for worship. Yet you could never get the sound of the Sabbath bell out of your ears; and, even now, you cannot forget the profession you once made, nor the joys you once knew; and you cannot be easy in your sins. There is a spark of heavenly fire that still lingers within you, and it will not die out, even though you seek to quench it that it may not hinder you from going after your lusts. That is God's grip still upon you; oh, that I might be his ambassador of peace, to fling wide the doors of his mercy to you! Poor prodigal, thou art clad in rags; the sty is thine only sleeping-place, and the swine thine only companions; thou wouldst fain fill thy belly with the husks that they eat: but thou must not, for thou art a God-made man, and swine's

food can never satisfy thee. As thou standest here, perhaps there is a tear trickling down thy cheek because of the many years that thou hast spent in sin, and thou art saying, "I would arise, and go unto my Father, but I fear that he has forgotten me." Oh, say not that! But do as the prodigal did; arise, and come unto thy Father, for he will give thee such a reception as the prodigal received. You shall have the kiss of forgiveness upon your brow, the best robe of your Saviour's perfect righteousness shall be cast all around you, the ring of everlasting love shall be placed upon your finger, the shoes of peace shall be fitted to your feet, you shall eat the fat things of the promises of God; there shall be music in your ears, music in your house, music on earth, and music in heaven itself, because he that was dead is alive again, he that was lost is found.

This should be your consolation: "In that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted." Did I hear you say, "But I cannot see how Christ was ever in the same position that I am in, for he was never a backslider"? That is quite true; but what are your trials? First, you are tried by the burden of sin that is resting upon you; and Christ had the sins of all his people resting upon him, so he knows what that burden means. Next, you are tried by the loss of the light of God's countenance; so was he, for he cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Then, you say that you have lost all your friends; so had he, for, in his time of trial, "they all forsook him, and fled." You say, also, that you are despised, that you are the subject of the song of the drunkard and the mirth of the mocker; so was he, for he could truly say, "Reproach hath broken mine heart." So Christ can sympathize—not with your sin, for he never had any of his own,—but with your sorrow, which is the consequence of sin, for he had to bear all that before you did.

IV. Now I have to close by speaking TO THE WHOLE ASSEMBLY.

I think I might liken you, on a large scale, to that little band of pilgrims,—Christiana, and Mercy, and Matthew, and James, and the rest of them who started from the City of Destruction,—who, when they came to the Interpreter's House, were put under the escort of Mr. Greatheart. I am not Mr. Greatheart;—I am but one of the children;—but our great Saviour is Mr. Greatheart, and he is going with us all the way to the Celestial City. We are but like those boys and girls, and we are afraid of what we may meet on the road. There are lions in the way; but Mr. Greatheart can kill them, or restrain them from hurting us. There is Apollyon in the valley, but our Greatheart is more than a match for the arch-fiend. We shall have to go through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, yet each one of us shall be able to say, "I will fear no evil, for thou art with me." We shall have to go through the Enchanted Ground; but, as Christ will be with us, we shall not fall asleep there to our grievous hurt. We shall have to go through Vanity Fair, and to bear the jeer and the jibe of the mocking mob; but we can bear all that, for we shall have our great Captain with us. But,—and here comes the dark thought to some,—we shall at last come to the dark river without a bridge. Mr. Greatheart—whom Bunyan meant

to be the minister, had to go through the stream with the rest; but when we come to the river, our Mr. Greatheart, Christ himself,—will go through the river with each one of us. He will put his almighty arm around us; and when we get where our feet cannot feel the bottom, he will say to each one of us, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee." To die with Jesus is better even than living with him except that higher style of living with him beyond the river of death, for—

"Jesus can make a dying bed
Feel soft as downy pillows are,
While on his breast I lean my head,
And breathe my life out sweetly there."

In this sense, our text shines like a cluster of stars. Jesus died, Jesus rose again; in that he died, he can sympathize; in that he rose again, he can succour. Lay hold of this text whenever you think of death with any gloomy cast in your mind; and let us go on our way, each one singing,—

"Since Jesus is mine, I'll not fear undressing,
But gladly put off this garment of clay;
To die in the Lord is a covenant blessing,
Since Jesus to glory through death led the way."

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

2 CORINTHIANS VI. 1—18.

2 Cor., Chap. vi. Verse 1. *We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.*

God's servants are called to take many different positions. They are ambassadors under one aspect; they are workers under another. As ambassadors, they are ambassadors for Christ; as workers, they are workers together with God. Oh, how much it costs to win a soul! I mean, not only how much it cost the Saviour, so that he broke his very heart over it, and poured out his life's blood;—but also how much it must cost the messenger of peace! He must know how to beseech and implore; and when even this fails, he must still go on toiling, labouring, as a worker together with God.

2. *(For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.)*

I trust that, if I am addressing any who say that it is too late for them to be saved, and that their sin is too great to be forgiven, this text will drive away that unholy and unwarranted fear: "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."

Then the apostle goes on to speak of himself, and the rest of the apostles and other preachers of the Word:—

3, 4. *Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed: but in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God,*

As those early servants of the Lord really did.

4—10. *In much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings; by pureness, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, by honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and yet true; as unknown and yet well known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.*

All these things Paul and his brethren were to be and to do in order to win souls for Christ; just as the hunters in the cold North seek after furs, and try all sorts of plans to catch the wild creatures on which they grow. They will trap them, or snare them, or shoot them; but, somehow or other, they will get them. They will be on the alert all day, and all night, too. They will learn the habits of every creature they have to deal with, but they will get the furs somehow. And so must the true minister of Christ be willing to be anything, to do anything, to suffer anything, to bear reproach and shame, to be nothing, or to be all things to all men, if by any means he may save some.

11, 12. *O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged. Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels.*

If they were not saved, it was not because Paul did not open his mouth to speak to them, and to warn and invite them, nor because he did not open his heart, and feel, in his very bowels, the movements of a sacred compassion for them.

Now, having thus spent himself in his endeavour to bring them to Christ, he writes to those whom he did bring:—

13. *Now for a recompence in the same,*

There must be some wages for this blessed work. The apostle wisely puts it on that footing, as if, surely, they were indebted to him; but the payment that he seeks is, of course, no personal gain to him; he only puts it in that form, but it is a gain to them.

13. (*I speak as unto my children,*) *be ye also enlarged.*

"There has been so much earnest labour to secure your conversion, so be ye also in earnest to bring in others. Get large thoughts of God; be fully consecrated to him; spend and be spent for him. Follow a good example." Paul could well urge them to that consecration when he had given himself so completely to the work of winning souls: "Be ye also enlarged."

14. *Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers:*

Not in any way,—neither in marriage, which is the chief of all forms of yoking, nor yet in business or other partnerships.

14. *For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?*

You must be in the same world with them, but keep yourself distinct from them. Go not into their society by your own choice, nor seek your pleasure with them.

15—18. *And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.*

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

RESTLESS! PEACELESS!

A Sermon

PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JUNE 2ND, 1904,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, May 21st, 1876.

"But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked."—Isaiah lvii. 20, 21.

AMONG the greatest privileges of the believer in Christ are those choice blessings, rest and peace. Believing in Christ Jesus unto eternal life, he knows that his sin is pardoned, that he is a child of God, that omnipotence will preserve him even to the end, and that he will, by-and-by, be with Christ where he is, not only to behold, but also to share his glory for ever and ever. Consequently, his heart is at rest, for he leaves all that concerns him, whether in the present or the future, in the hands of his Heavenly Father, casting all his care upon him who careth for him; and, therefore, he has peace, perfect peace, in his soul. This peace and rest, which the believer enjoys even here and now, will deepen and increase until, in eternity, they will reach their perfection, and the child of God will, for ever and for evermore, in the blessed state above, be without even the slightest disturbance of heart, and will rest in the presence of God with his glorified spirit as full of joy as it can possibly be. The apostle Paul truly writes, "We which have believed do enter into rest;" but he also adds, just as truly, "There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God."

These choice privileges of rest and peace belong, however, exclusively to believers; "the wicked" have no portion in them. They are, according to the testimony of Holy Writ, like the restless sea, which is never quite quiet, even in its greatest calm; and is never to be trusted for a resting-place; but, ever and anon, is lashed into fury, seething like the contents of a huge cauldron, and hurling up from its depths the mire and dirt which have lain there unseen; —such is the condition of the unregenerate heart of unrenewed man.

There are two things, in our text, of which I am going to try to speak. The first is, *a fact observed:* "the wicked are like the

troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." The second is, *a sentence pronounced;* and it is pronounced by God himself: "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked."

I. First, then, here is A FACT OBSERVED,—that the wicked are like the troubled sea. Who are these wicked people, who are like the restless waves of the turbulent ocean? I take the term to describe two classes of sinners.

First, by the expression, "the wicked", as used in the Scriptures, we must often understand *overt transgressors*,—persons who are living in the indulgence of open and known sin. Then, secondly, there is another class of sinners,—not open transgressors, like the others I have mentioned; still, *they have heard the gospel, and they have rejected it;* and, consequently, since we cannot put them down in any other category, and since their sin has a special aggravation about it because of the light and privileges which they have enjoyed, and yet despised, or neglected, they also must be put down with "the wicked", for they, too, "are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest." Let us begin with those, whose sins, as Paul says, "are open beforehand, going before to judgment." Why are they unrestful and unpeaceful?

First, because they are themselves swayed by restless passions. There are some sins, which will not let a man be quiet so long as he indulges in them. Take the sin of lust, for instance; who can ever satisfy its cravings? Let a man once indulge his evil passions, and can those passions ever be satisfied? Nay, they keep on getting more and more hungry, as a man would become the more thirsty through drinking brine. Does lust ever, of its own accord, cease its cravings? Nay; it is as insatiate as the grave itself, and it will suck a man's very life away unless the grace of God shall mercifully and miraculously interpose. If thou, young man, dost give thyself up to what is erroneously called the pursuit of pleasure, it is quite certain that thou wilt not find rest for thy soul in that direction! Thou hast taken a dose of poison that will make thy blood hot and feverish, and that will cause true rest to flee from thy pillow. This is a subject upon which I cannot say more, in this public assembly, except to add, with the preacher of old, "Know thou, O young man, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment!" Let the solemn admonition of good Dr. Doddridge come home to thy heart, and say thou with him,—

> "How will my heart endure
> The terrors of that day;
> When earth and heaven before his face,
> Astonish'd shrink away?"

Then listen to his earnest exhortation, and not only listen to it, but at once obey it,—

> "Ye sinners, seek his grace,
> Whose wrath ye cannot bear;
> Fly to the shelter of his cross,
> And find salvation there."

Take, next, the sin of anger. There are some persons, who very soon get angry, but they do not as quickly cool down; or, if they do, they nurse their hatred, and watch for any opportunity of paying back their adversary in the base coin of revenge. Let me say to such a man,—You cannot enjoy real rest and peace unless you fully and freely forgive all who have wronged you. You may try to lay a salve upon your conscience, and to preach peace to your heart; but if resentment still lingers in your bosom, and especially the resentment which seeks an opportunity to display itself in an act of ill-will, you cannot rest. There are some animals that seem born to fight; and if they cannot tear others in pieces, they seem as if they must tear themselves; or, like a serpent, which, in its rage, will poison itself. Such is anger; such is malice; and thou, O man, must get rid of these evil things if thou desirest to know what real rest means!

"Sin, like a venomous disease,
Infects our vital blood;
The only balm is sovereign grace,
And the physician God.

"Madness by nature reigns within,
The passions burn and rage;
Till God's own Son, with skill divine,
The inward fire assuage."

Such, too, is envy,—a very common sin which is not spoken of as often as it should be. This is the sin of the poor man, who cannot bear to see another man better off than he himself is. This is the sin of the sick man, who is envious of the healthy. Ay, but envy may be found, not only among the poor, but also among princes; not only among the sick, but also among the strong. And when a man once becomes so envious that another man's joy is his sorrow, and another man's gain is his loss, and he cannot be content with his own lot because another man has more honour, or more money, or more friends than he has, he has a poisoned arrow rankling within him, which will breed a thousand woes, and make rest of heart impossible to him. Envy even grows by feeding upon itself; therefore, I charge thee, whatever thou doest, get rid of it, if thou desirest to find real rest.

Pride is another enemy of peace and rest. If you see a proud man, you may feel sure that he is not a restful man. It is in the Valley of Humiliation that the flowers of peace will be discovered. As for the pompous people, who are so high in their own esteem that they look down on all others,—pity them, my brethren; do not get angry with them. It is a sad disease from which they are suffering; their brain is turned, so deal gently with them, think as kindly of them as you can, and pray to God to heal them. Mind, also, that you do not catch their complaint, for it is very contagious, and there are many who are proud of their humility, and who condemn the pride of others when, all the while, they are really still prouder themselves.

Then there is avarice; and when a man is once possessed by the desire to amass gain, there is no peace or rest for him. Suppose he acquires what he reckons to be wealth; it ceases to be wealth as

soon as he has gained it. He thought that, if ever he should secure a certain sum which he had set his heart on, he would retire from business; but, having saved that amount, he now regards it as quite insufficient; and ten times as much is the mark at which he now aims. If he should ever succeed in hoarding that amount, he will find that he is further off the goal of his desire than he was when he started. Some there are, I do verily believe, who, if they could claim the whole world as their own, would want the sun and moon and stars as well, for nothing could ever satisfy them. Once get into the grip of avarice, and rest is impossible.

And it is much the same also with ambition,—not the desire to use one's capacities to the full, especially for God's glory, and the good of our fellow-creatures; but that craving for so-called "glory" which makes a man court the homage of his fellow-men, and which will not let him be content unless he is set up on a high pedestal for fools to stare at. Ah, sir, if thou art ambitious, in that sense, thou and peace have parted company, and are not likely to meet again. But if thou wilt do the right, and leave thy reputation in the hands of God, and especially if thou wilt leave those lofty pathways, which, after all, lead only to the grave, then mayest thou find peace; but thou canst not find it so long as any of these evils, that I have mentioned, are reigning within thy heart.

The first reason, then, why the wicked man's heart is like the troubled sea is, because there are evil passions within it which will not let it rest.

The next reason is, because the wicked man is agitated by the memory of his old sins. Suppose him to have been, for some years, engaged in an evil course,—in dishonesty or unchastity; he cannot, even if he tries, forget his sins. They have burnt themselves into his very soul; and, what is even worse than the memory of sin, I suppose that you know how every sin breeds other sins, so that, every time you sin, you have a still greater tendency to commit more sin. This is a fact that is strangely true both as to the body and as to the soul; we wear tracks for ourselves where there were none before. If we have, at first, to force our way through the brushwood of conscience, and to cut down, as it were, the old timber of our early instruction and the gracious examples set before us in our childhood; by-and-by we make a trail for ourselves, and then a beaten track, so that it becomes ever easier and yet easier to sin; nay, more than that, there seems to be a pressure put by habit upon a wicked man so that, what he once did from choice, he comes at last to do because he must. Sin in the soul is like leaven in the dough; it heaves, and ferments; and though it was, perhaps, put into you twenty years ago, or more, it will go on fermenting and working until the whole of your manhood shall be soured by it.

Beside all this, the ungodly man is like the sea for restlessness, because, like the sea, he is governed by a greater power than his own. The sea feels the force of the moon, and is agitated and stirred by the mysterious agency of the winds; and the wicked man is under the dominion of the prince of the power of the air. If, for a while, he would be at rest, Satan will not permit him to be in peace. He

puts opportunities of sinning before him, and then excites the desire to indulge in the evil thing. Satan is no myth; they, who think that he is, cannot, surely, have opened their eyes, or else they would have discovered, in their very unbelief in his existence, that he had given them that unbelief. Those, who have stood foot to foot with Apollyon, and fought with him, and overcome him in the hour of temptation, will never doubt that there is a great fallen spirit who strives to lead men into sin. Satan and his myriads of myrmidons still lie in wait for the ungodly, or openly drive them into fierce lusts and evil passions so that they sin again and again.

Nor is this all, for wicked men—those who go into open sin,—are kept, by the action of others, from becoming quiet. If it were not for the restraints of society, what horrible places would those be where the utterly dissolute and abandoned assemble! Even as it is, every now and then, we read, in the newspapers, records of the doings of so-called "gentlemen" that reveal to us something of what goes on when Bacchus rules or riots. Then there are the brutalized beings at the other end of the social ladder, the "fiends" who use their boots so heavily upon their wives. Put a few dozen of them together, and let them have their own sweet will. Do not restrain them at all, and see what they will do. God only knows what wondrous patience he has with such men when they get together, and egg each other on in sin. I have often marvelled that he does not speedily put an end to their blasphemy and indecency and cruelty. Yet are they spared, notwithstanding their sin; but they cannot rest, for one will not let the others be quiet; and if, at any time, a good resolution should be formed by one of the company, another laughs that resolution down, and keeps the whole society "like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt."

I do not wonder that a wicked man cannot rest, because such a man is out of gear with the entire universe of God. Lift up your eyes to yonder starry orbs, and remember there is not one of them disobedient to the law of its Maker. The comet, which was thought to be eccentric, obeys in all respects its great Creator's will. Everything that you can see, from the tiny atom of dust that is borne along by the wind, up to the huge Atlantic billow in which the leviathan feels at home, is under the power of the divine law. From the archangel before the throne of God, down to the midge that dances in the summer sunbeam, everything is obedient to the Lord of all, except the wicked man, and he says, "I will not obey him." Well, as he is out of gear with all the rest of the universe, is it any wonder that he is restless as the waves of the sea, and that there is no peace for him? If you were to set yourselves to disobey the physical laws of the universe, for instance, paying no regard to the law of gravitation, but leaping from a church spire, or falling down a precipice, you know what would come of such madness. If you ever set yourself up in opposition to law, you may depend upon it that law will get the mastery over you; and the man, who lives in disobedience to God's moral law, will find that it will be the same with him, and he will have no rest for ever and ever. As God's

servant, I must say to you, very plainly, and very earnestly,—You cannot possibly find rest and peace in the course you are now pursuing. May God enable you to escape from your sins, and to trust in Jesus Christ, his Son, that you may have both joy and peace in believing!

Now I have to speak, very briefly, to those who could not be put down among the outwardly and notoriously wicked. I thank God that you could not; but, still, you have heard the gospel, perhaps for many years, and you understand it, yet you have never received it. There is reconciliation with God to be had, yet you remain his enemy. Now, I will not say, for a moment, that the moral man, who is not a Christian, is to be put in the same category as the immoral. In many respects, he does not do so much harm in the world as the other man does; but let me tell you this, my friend, if you sin against light and knowledge, there may be an intensity of guilt in your sin which may not be found in the man who is, apparently, worse than you are. He may never have had such teaching and advantages, nor such a tender conscience as you have had; and hence his sin, bad as it is, like that of Sodom and Gomorrah, may be such that it shall be more tolerable for him at the day of judgment than for you, who have not sinned one tithe as much, according to the judgment of others, but who have sinned against the gospel,—sinned against the dying Saviour's blood,—sinned against the Holy Ghost. God grant that you may never run this terrible risk!

Let me say to you, who are living without Christ, that, however excellent and amiable you may be, I know that you are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest. I know some special times when you cannot rest,—when you hear of others being converted,—your brothers or sisters coming forward to confess Christ,—your friends or relatives rejoicing in Jesus as their Saviour. "Ah," you say to yourself, "they are restful and peaceful, but I am not." I know how you feel, on communion nights, sometimes, when you have to go away, or to look on at others gathered around the table of the Lord. You do not feel easy, then, do you? And you feel very uneasy, too, when any of your companions die,—those who are very much of your own sort. You attend their funeral, and the thought strikes you, "Shall I die as they have done, without Christ, and without hope? Shall I pass away from under the sound of the gospel without having given any evidence of conversion?" You do not feel easy then, I know; and, sometimes, you feel very much like the troubled sea when conscience begins to call you to account. John Bunyan, in his "Holy War," gives a graphic description of what happened to Mr. Conscience when Mansoul was being besieged by Immanuel, and that is very much what has happened to some of you. They said that he was out of his wits, but he was never more truly in his wits than when he was crying out for Mansoul to yield to the great King Shaddai; and I feel sure that some of you have felt, upon the door of your conscience, the blows of the great battering-ram that Bunyan describes, and you have been ready to open it; yet, still, you are not at rest, for you have not come to

Christ, who alone can give you rest. It is still true, as Dr. Watts wrote, long ago,—

"In vain the trembling conscience seeks
Some solid ground to rest upon;
With long despair the spirit breaks,
Till we apply to Christ alone."

If you hear the gospel faithfully preached, you cannot be at rest. Some of you try to be satisfied with a false peace; but, by God's grace, we will plague you to Christ yet; we will love you to Christ; we will incessantly worry you till, at last, you yield yourself up to Jesus. Some of you are getting on in business; God has been very gracious in preserving you in life, restoring you from sickness, or keeping you in health; you have a better situation now than you ever had before, yet you are not restful. You feel grateful to God for all his goodness to you, yet you say, "There is something more needed." Yes, and that something is the one thing needful. I am thankful that God is prospering you, but I hope you will never be able to rest until you have that one thing needful,—the grace of God. Some of you are very thoughtful, and when you get alone for half an hour, it is very awkward for you, for there are certain problems that you cannot solve, and they sorely perplex you. Worst of all are your forecasts of the future. Sometimes, you look ahead, and you picture yourself upon a sick bed, and you say, "Can I die triumphantly as I am?" You know you cannot. And then, sometimes, you picture yourself rising from the dead, when the angel's trumpet blast is sounding, and the quick and the dead are standing before the judgment-seat of Christ. You cannot bear to think of that great white throne, and the separation of the righteous from the wicked, for you know where you must go, unless a great change is wrought in you. Though not outwardly wicked, you do not belong to the sheep; then you must go with the goats; and when you think of this, and the future stands, for the moment, present before your mind's eye, your spirit is "like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." I would that you had rest. God grant it to you this very hour! But let Augustus Toplady's prayer be your prayer also,—

"Oh, may I never rest
Till I find rest in thee,
Till of my pardon here possessed,
I feel thy love to me!

"Turn not thy face away,
Thy look can make me clean;
Me in thy wedding robes array,
And cover all my sin.

"Tell me, my God, for whom
Thy precious blood was shed;
For sinners? Lord, as such I come,
For such the Saviour bled."

II. Now, secondly, and only for a minute or two, in our text there is A SENTENCE PRONOUNCED: "No peace"—you notice that the words,

"*there is*," are in italics, because they are not in the original; so the text runs, "No peace, saith my God, to the wicked."

It is God himself who says it. There may be a truce, for God is slow to anger; but there is "no peace." God is at war with you if you are among "the wicked." You may be under the delusion that there is peace, but God's voice of truth shatters that delusion to pieces. There can be no peace where there is unpardoned sin. Until you have humbled yourself before God, and sought and found mercy, God is at war with you, and you are at war with him. There can be no peace where there is no purity. God has no peace with sin, and never can have. Like a devouring fire, his holiness burns against sin; and thou must be made pure, thy nature must be changed, the love of sin must be killed in thee, and thou must as vehemently love that which is good and right; or, else, still God's voice thunders from heaven's burning throne, "No peace! No peace! No peace!"

"But I will go to church, and receive the sacrament," says one. You will get no peace that way, except a false peace that is worse than none. "But I will attend the means of grace with the Dissenters," says another. You will get no peace that way, if that is all that you do. If your sin be unforgiven by God, and if your nature be unchanged by the Holy Spirit, all the religiousness in the world will bring you no peace. "But I will weep an ocean of tears, and I will offer prayers continually." No peace will come to you, that way, so long as you remain wicked, for God says, "No peace! No peace!" And "wicked" you must remain till Jesus washes you white in the fountain filled with his precious blood, and until the Spirit of God renews your nature.

"Not all the outward forms on earth,
Nor rites that God has given,
Nor will of man, nor blood, nor birth,
Can raise a soul to heaven.

"The sovereign will of God alone
Creates us heirs of grace;
Born in the image of his Son,
A new peculiar race.

"The Spirit, like some heavenly wind,
Blows on the sons of flesh;
Creats a new,—a heavenly mind,—
And forms the man afresh."

"Oh!" says another, "but I will promise to be better, and to do better; I will amend my ways." So you may, and so you should; but still saith my God unto the wicked, "No peace!" What say you to all this? Behold your God in arms against you! Omnipotence comes forth to war against you, the creature of an hour! Will you submit? Be wise, I pray you; cast down your weapons, cry for mercy; accept the reconciliation which Christ has wrought. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has suffered, "the Just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." If thou wilt but trust him, what he did shall be accounted as thine; that is to say, the punishment

that he suffered shall be reckoned as if thou hadst suffered it; and the righteousness he wrought shall be counted as if thou hadst wrought it; and God shall accept thee in his Son's place, and for his Son's sake More than that, the Spirit of God will overshadow thee, and give thee a new heart, and a right spirit, and take away the heart of stone out of thy flesh, and give thee a heart of flesh. Art thou willing now to yield, and end this unequal war, and be at peace with God? Then the Lord, who gave his Son once, gives thee his Son over again into thine heart, and he says, "Peace! Peace! Go in peace; thy sins, which are many, are forgiven thee." He who with his heart forsakes his sin, and unfeignedly believes in Jesus, shall have the peace of God, which passeth all understanding; but he who will keep his sin, and so remain among the wicked, or who will keep his self-righteousness, and so refuse the salvation of Christ, has nothing to go home with but this, "No peace! No peace!" And, oh, to die with that terrible knell ringing in one's ears! To look up to God, and to hear him say, "No peace!" To have the prayers of your friends for you, but to feel no peace! To lift your own eye to heaven, but to find prayer freeze upon your soul as you hear again this sentence from God the Judge, "No peace!" And then follows the eternity, in which there is no peace! God grant this may not be the sad portion of any one of us, but may the Lord give to each of us peace, perfect peace, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

PSALM XXIII., AND ISAIAH LV.

We will first read that choicest of all the Psalms,—the twenty-third. It is like a precious pearl shining with a mild lustre. This Psalm is, among the other Psalms, what the lark is among the other birds; it soars and sings till it is lost in the heights to which it ascends.

Psalm xxiii. Verse 1. *The LORD is my Shepherd;*—

What a precious title the psalmist used in speaking of his God! It is right to call the Lord a Shepherd. "The Shepherd of Israel" is a very blessed and true title for him; but "my Shepherd" is best of all. I wish, beloved, that each of you could truthfully say, with David, "'The Lord is *my* Shepherd.' He owns me; and as I am his property, he will preserve me, protect me, provide for me, guide me, and be everything to my weakness, and folly, and necessity, that a shepherd is to a sheep." "The Lord is my Shepherd;"—

1. *I shall not want.*

"Not only do I not want at the present moment, but I never shall want. I may sometimes foolishly fancy that I shall come to want; but I never shall as long as God provides for me. How could such a Shepherd as he is, almighty and all-sufficient, ever suffer one of his sheep to lack any good thing? No; 'I shall not want.' All the world beside may want, but I shall not while Jehovah is my Provider. Famine may be sore in the land; there may be neither dew nor rain, and even the brook Cherith may at last be dried up; but since 'Jehovah is my Shepherd, I shall not want.'"

As a guarantee of his care of us in the future, we turn to our experience in the past and the present. What is our experience of our great Shepherd even now?

2. *He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:*

Here is blessed rest, and here is also gracious provision for the needs of the sheep. The pasture is sweet and tender; and there is so much of the green grass that it cannot all be eaten, and the superabundance makes a soft bed for the tired sheep: "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures." Repose, O believer, in the abundant provision of God's grace! A sheep needs sometimes to lie down. It is as necessary for its health that it should have time to digest its food as that it should have proper and sufficient food to eat. May the Lord graciously give to each of you the sweet rest of meditation and contemplation,—that blessed rest, to which faith attains when it grows into firm confidence and full assurance, so that you may be able to say with David, "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures."

But our spiritual life is not to be all spent in lying down; there must come a time for going forward, so David adds:—

2. *He leadeth me—*

What a peerless Guide he is, since infallible wisdom is his! And how gracious and condescending it is, on his part, to go first in the way which he means us to take! David does not say, "He driveth me;" but "He leadeth me"—

2, 3. *Beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness—*

"In each one of them; he is my Exemplar in every virtue, for he himself has endured all temptations that are incident to my life's pathway; and, all the way, 'he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness'"—

3. *For his name's sake.*

"Not because of any goodness in me, but because of the goodness that is in him, and for the glory of his holy name, 'he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness.'"

"Also, 'He restoreth my soul.' When I wander, he restores my soul to the right road. When I become empty, he stores my soul again with good things; he *re-storeth* my soul."

4. *Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil:*

"Not only shall there be none, but I will fear none." A sense of the Lord's presence lifts a Christian above even fear. You know how often it is true that we "feel a thousand deaths in fearing one." But if we have a sense of our Saviour's presence, when we do really walk through the valley of death-shade, not a trace of fear shall come across our peaceful souls.

4. *For thou art with me;*

The presence of Christ is all that his people can ever want. The all-powerful, ever-faithful, infinitely-compassionate One being with us, what cause for fear can possibly remain?

4. *Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.*

"To see thy sceptre, and even to feel thy chastising rod;—to know that thou art a King, and that thou rulest over Israel;—to know that, as a Shepherd, thou carriest a crook to guide thy flock; shall be enough to comfort my heart, and to sustain my spirit."

How sweet is the next verse!

5. *Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies:*

How calmly the psalmist writes! He realizes that he has enemies, yet he means to sit down to a feast; he is not going to snatch a hurried mouthful or two, but "a table" is "prepared" for him as though for a banquet. His enemies may look on while he is feasting, but they cannot take away his enjoyment of the feast.

5. *Thou anointest my head with oil;*

He receives a fresh anointing for new service, even the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

5. *My cup runneth over.*

"I have all I want, and even more than I need, so that others, not so favoured as I am, may come and catch some of the droppings from my overflowing cup. It is so full, O Lord, that it cannot hold all that thou givest me! Till thou dost enlarge my capacity, I shall still have to say, "My cup runneth over."

The psalmist's next word also has much meaning and force in it:—

6. *Surely—*

There are no ifs, no doubts, no fears about the matter: "Surely"—

6. *Goodness and mercy shall follow me—*

"These two holy angels shall watch over my footsteps, and track me wherever I go;—'goodness' to preserve me, and 'mercy' to pardon me!—'goodness' to supply my needs, and 'mercy' to blot out my sins." And these angels shall follow me—

6. *All the days of my life:*

"Not merely now and then, but all my days;—my dark days as well as my bright ones;—these heavenly messengers will never forsake me."

6. *And I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.*

This life begins here, for this earth is but the lower part of God's house; and when the time shall come for us to leave this earth, we, who are the Lord's own children, shall only go upstairs to the higher rooms, to "dwell in the house of the Lord for ever."

This, then, is the portion of the children of God; but there are some to whom David's language will seem strange. They cannot sing this sweet Psalm, for their life is as restless as the waves of the sea. No quiet pastoral poem could set forth their joy, for the sound of war is heard in the streets of their city of Mansoul. If any such souls are seeking rest and peace, let them hearken to the voice of God, as it speaks to them from the Book of the prophet Isaiah, chapter fifty-five.

Isaiah lv. Verses 1, 2. *Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not?*

Why have you sought rest where it can never be found? Why have you craved delights which can never satisfy you? Cease from such folly.

2. *Hearken diligently unto me,—*

Thus speaks the Lord Jehovah: "Hearken diligently unto me,"—

2, 3. *And eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you,—*

"With you" who have any desire for it,—"with you" who hunger and thirst after righteousness, and who have no other recommendation than that, poor as it is,—"I will make an everlasting covenant with you,"—

3, 4. *Even the sure mercies of David. Behold, I have given him—*

The Son of David,—"great David's greater Son,"—and God's own well-beloved and only-begotten Son, even Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. God says, "I have given him"—

4—7. *For a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people. Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not, and nations that knew*

not thee shall run unto thee because of the LORD *thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for he hath glorified thee. Seek ye the* LORD *while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the* LORD, *and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.*

Blessed be his holy name!

8—13. *For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the* LORD. *For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and making it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it. For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the* LORD *for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.*

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—661, 614, 658.

THE SWORD AND THE TROWEL.

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A DIRE DISEASE STRANGELY CURED.

A Sermon

PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JUNE 9TH, 1904,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, May 28th, 1876.

"With his stripes we are healed."—Isaiah liii. 5.
"By whose stripes ye were healed."—1 Peter ii. 24.

IT is well for the preacher, every now and then, to go back to the very beginning, and once again traverse the whole ground of the gospel, just as the teacher does, in the school, when, after his pupils have advanced to some of the higher branches of study, he deems it desirable to make sure that they are well grounded in the very elements of knowledge, for he knows that it is quite possible for him to be doing mischief in leading them on to the higher forms of study unless they are thoroughly familiar with the first principles. So he goes back to the beginning over and over again, and a wise preacher will do likewise. As for myself, it is not at all grievous to speak, in the simplest terms, of Jesus Christ and the plan of salvation; and, "for you, it is safe," as Paul said in writing "the same things" to the Philippians. I have always noticed that those, who love Christ best, and who know the most about his great salvation, are just the very people who delight to hear again and again,—

"The old, old story
Of Jesus and his love."

To persons of that sort, the gospel message never grows stale. It is like that familiar air, "Home, Sweet Home," which had such a strange influence over our soldiers in the Crimea; only that, whereas the playing or singing of that tune brought on such an attack of home-sickness that the men, who heard it, when far from their native land, were rendered quite unfit for duty; in our case, the familiar story of Jesus and his dying love, and his substitutionary sufferings, will never cease to charm our ears, and fire our hearts with holy ardour in his blessed service. I am also quite sure that, to those who least relish the gospel, and who know the least about it, it is beyond

measure important that they should hear it as often as they possibly can; for it may be that, one of these days, it will find an entrance into their hitherto closed hearts.

Therefore, preacher, ring that bell again and again. It may be that, when you rang it before, their ears were stopped up, so that they did not catch its sweet silvery note. So, ring it again, brother; for it may be that, the next time you do so, the Holy Spirit will unstop those ears that have been so long shut to the gospel;—yea, even though the blessed bell has been ringing close to them for seventy years or more, and they have grown grey, or white, without having ever caught the sweetness of its melodious music. So, ring that bell again, brother; ay, even if they are dying, let them still hear it, for the dying have, through the mercy of God, at last heard and heeded it, and so have begun to hear the harps of angels only a few moments afterwards.

I am going, at least on this occasion, to do what I urge other preachers often to do; that is, keep to the simplicities of the faith, trying to show how the dire disease of sin is strangely cured by the stripes that fell upon our Lord Jesus Christ, for both the prophet and the apostle say that we are healed by or with "his stripes."

I. So, I begin by saying, HERE IS A DISEASE IMPLIED.

You cannot heal men who are not sick, or wounded. It matters not how matchless the medicine is;—even though it is the substitutionary suffering of the Son of God himself;—if it is to heal, it must heal some malady or other; and, brethren, it is quite true that there is a dreadful disease which has attacked the whole human race; you scarcely need that I should tell you that it is the disease of sin. It came to this earth when that old serpent, the devil, tempted Mother Eve. Then did this dire disease begin to course through human veins, and it has descended to every individual of the whole race; and, at this moment, it lurks within each one of us. "Lurks," did I say? Nay, it is worse than that, for it has manifested itself; it has displayed its venom and virulence; it has shown itself in the life; and, like the leprosy upon the brow of the man suffering from that dreadful disease, it is visible upon us all.

The disease of sin is exceedingly injurious. There are some diseases that affect the heart; and sin has turned the heart of man to a stone. There are some other diseases that afflict the eyes; and sin has blinded man's understanding,—his mental and spiritual eyesight. There are some diseases that affect the hands; and, in our natural condition, we cannot work for God's glory, or grasp gospel blessings, because the disease of sin has withered our hands spiritually. We never know at exactly what point the danger from any disease may be the greatest, for it is not always that which appears upon the surface which is most to be dreaded, as there are hidden places in the system which may be seriously affected without giving externally any indication of the mischief. The Lord desires truth in our inward parts, but sin is the enemy of truth; and it is only the Lord who can make us to know wisdom in our hidden parts, for sin has made us foolish, even as Solomon says that "foolishness is bound in the heart of a child." Sin has injured us in more ways

than I can tell; when man fell, it was no slight accident that happened; it was the utter ruin of humanity that then occurred. There is something grand, at least in appearance, about humanity, even in its ruined condition, for it is the work of God; but, alas! the bat, and the owl, and the viper, and many other unclean creatures have made human nature to be their foul den. "Lucifer, son of the morning," is not the only one who has fallen as from heaven, for this also is true of the whole race of mankind.

You see, then, that this disease of sin is most injurious. There are some diseases that make men quite helpless. We have seen a man, who could not do a day's work even if his very life depended upon it. He could not lift so much as his hand, and he had to be fed, and nursed, and cared for by others, for he was paralyzed; and, in a spiritual sense, so far as anything in the nature of good works is concerned, sin has paralyzed man altogether. Indeed, it has taken his very life away from him, so that he is truly said to be "dead in trespasses and sins."

Sin is also a disease which frequently becomes loathsome. In some men, who have had the opportunity of indulging their evil propensities and passions to the utmost, sin has become so loathsome that even their fellow-men have had to put them away by themselves. What are our prisons, and many of our asylums, but moral lazar-houses where we have to shut up leprous men and women lest they should contaminate the whole race? I said that sin is a disease which frequently becomes loathsome; I meant, loathsome to men; for it is always loathsome to God, and to the holy angels. I suppose that the most prurient ulcer, which ever sickened the pitying gaze of a sympathizing onlooker, could not be so disgusting to the mind of the most delicate man or woman as the slightest sin is to the mind of God. His righteous soul loathes and abhors it; and he says of it, "Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate!"

Frequently, also, sin makes men a source of danger to others. It is really always so, although we do not always know it; for every evil example is contagious, every foul word is infectious, and there is something about even the most moral man which it would not be safe for others to copy. Certainly, if he has that dreadful disease of unbelief in his heart, it would be wrong for any other person to imitate him in that respect, whatever excellences may stand side by side with it.

In some cases, this disease of sin becomes very painful. I wish it was painful to every unhealed man and woman, for they might then be anxious to be cured of it; and let me tell you that there is no disease, to which our flesh is heir, that can bring such pain to a man as sin can, when once his conscience is quickened by the Holy Spirit. I think I know, as well as most men, what physical pain means; but I would sooner lie, bedridden, suffering all the pains that could be crowded into a human body, and lie like that for seventy years, than endure the tortures of a guilty conscience, or the pangs of a soul under sentence of condemnation. I know that, when I was under conviction of sin, I could sympathize with Job when he said, "My soul chooseth strangling and death rather than my life." It is a

terrible thing to see yourself, as in a looking-glass, with all your wounds bleeding, and to feel that you must say, "They have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment." It is a truly awful experience to see a devil in each wound, and to realize that you are yourself the worst of devils; and to hear the curse of God, like distant thunder, rumbling far away, yet constantly coming nearer and nearer; and to live in dread of the storm of everlasting wrath beating upon your unprotected head. Yes, the disease of sin is painful to the last degree to men whose consciences are not "seared with a hot iron."

Worst of all, *this disease causes death.* There is no human being, in whom sin has not already caused spiritual death, and no one in whom it will not cause eternal death, unless God, in his almighty grace, shall prevent it. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die," is a declaration that is only too terribly true. What that death will be, I shall not, at this time, attempt to show; but such words as these, coming from the lips of Christ, may tell you:—"These shall go away into everlasting punishment," "into the fire that never shall be quenched; where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." May none of you ever have to endure that death which never dies,—that dread eternal death, of which the Lord of life so positively speaks! Yet, as surely as God liveth, you will experience even that dread doom unless this mortal malady be healed.

II. Now, turning from the disease, let me point out to you THE MEDICINE MENTIONED IN THE TEXT: "With his stripes we are healed."

Brethren and sisters, you know right well that the medicine here meant is the substitutionary suffering of our Lord Jesus Christ on his people's behalf. I cannot imagine how anyone can read the chapter, from which our first text is taken, without seeing that "the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all," "the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." This is strange medicine,—that the wounds of Jesus should heal the wounds which sin hath made;—that the wounds upon his back and shoulders, where the cruel scourge smote him, should, by their blueness, bring spiritual healing to us; yet so it is, and this is the only remedy for the malady of sin. There have been many nostrums recommended by various quacks;—some have come with their "sacraments", so-called, some with their ceremonies, some with their philosophies; but they are all quacks, and their medicines have no healing power. The only cure for the wounds of sin is to be found in the stripes of Jesus.

Let me put this point very plainly before you. Jesus Christ stood in the stead of the sinner, and bore—that the sinner might not have to bear,—the righteous anger of God because of the sinner's guilt. They, who say that we represent God as being angry, and only to be appeased by the sufferings of his Son, know that they altogether misrepresent the truth that we believe. What we say is, that the infinitely holy God could not righteously have pardoned sin without having first vindicated his justice and the majesty of his law. I do not think that the enlightened conscience of man could ever have been contented without an atoning sacrifice. There is a necessity, not only

with God, but also with us, for a sacrifice for sin; and we must have it, or else our conscience cannot rest. This was the question I used to ask when I was in the depths of soul trouble,—"How can God be just, and yet forgive my sin?" I did want him to forgive me, but I did not want him to do it unjustly; for, if I could have obtained the forgiveness of my sin at the expense of his justice, I do not think that such forgiveness would ever have appeared to me to be consistent with the character of God. It was only when I understood that God could be both just and the Justifier of all who believe in Jesus that my soul rolled herself upon that blessed truth, and enjoyed such a luxury of rest as she had never even dreamt of before. Yes, God is infinitely just, his justice is as stern as if it had never been blended with his grace, yet he is as merciful and gracious as if justice had never been one of his attributes. This wonderful blending is gloriously manifested in the atonement of Jesus Christ, where, mark you, God himself—for Christ is God, as he says, "I and my Father are one,"—God himself, the righteous Judge, becomes the innocent Sufferer, standing in the culprit's stead, and sheathing in his own heart the gleaming blade that must, otherwise, have been bathed in human blood. O sirs, it is what Jesus bore that will heal you,—what Jesus bore when he stood in the stead of sinners, and offered to infinite and inflexible justice a full recompence for the crime, and guilt, and sin, and transgression of all who believe in him!

Look, away from your sin, to the great Sin-bearer. We will not trace him through all his sufferings, but begin with the "stripes" he endured in the garden of Gethsemane; can you bear to look upon that terrible agony, to hear his piercing cries, and to see his copious tears? Above all, can you bear to look upon his bloody sweat? His three favoured disciples could not, for "he found them sleeping for sorrow." Can you bear to look upon him as the rough men, guided by Judas the traitor, seize him, and lead him away to the various halls of judgment, and charge him with sedition and blasphemy? Can you endure to see him forsaken by every friend he had, and denied by that impetuous follower who had said, not long before, "Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee"? Can you bear to see him surrounded by the brutal Roman soldiers, and maltreated, and mocked, and spit upon by the unfeeling mob of railing legionaries? Can you bear to gaze upon his crown of thorns? Can you bear to listen to the blows from that awful scourge as they fall in quick succession upon his blessed back and shoulders? I must not go on to tell the sad, sad story at full length; it is too sorrowful to relate; but you know how, at last, they fastened him to the tree of the curse, then lifted him up upon the cross, dislocating all his bones as they dashed it into the socket in the earth which they had prepared to hold it. You have read of the fever which came upon him, till his mouth was dried up like an oven, and his tongue clave to the roof of his mouth. Yet, after all, terrible as all this was, it was only the shell, the externals of his bodily suffering; but the suffering of his soul was the very soul of his suffering. It was by the smiting of his body, and the more terrible smiting of his soul,—the suffering of his entire manhood in

unison with his Godhead,—that he took away the sin of his people, and opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers.

Let me urge all of you, who are diseased through sin, to go for healing to those blessed wounds of Jesus. Long ago, I learned the secret of this wondrous way of healing; and, now, whenever my wounds bleed afresh, I go again to the—

> "Fountain filled with blood
> Drawn from Immanuel's veins,"—

for it is "with his stripes" that I am healed.

III. Now, thirdly, I want to say a little about THE HEALING HERE MENTIONED.

Our second text speaks of it as a thing that was done in the past: "By whose stripes ye *were* healed;" so I should like you, my dear brethren and sisters in Christ, to remember when you were healed, years ago. Do you recollect the place where Jesus met with you? I remember, to a yard, where he revealed himself to my soul. Some of God's saints do not, but that does not matter in the least. A living man must have been born, at some time or other, even if he does not know when his birthday was; and so long as we have been healed, we need not be anxious to know when it took place. Still, it is helpful if we can recollect when God gave us healing through the wounds of his beloved Son.

Let me try to describe the process of healing. First of all, the stripes of Jesus heal us *by taking away the guilt of sin.* That is the all-important work. By nature, and by practice, too, we are guilty; but when we look to Christ's stripes, we see our guilt laid upon him; and, as it cannot be in two places at one time, we know that it is not on us any longer. The moment that a poor sinner sees Christ bearing his burden of guilt, and trusts Christ as his Burden-bearer, his burden is all gone. We sang, a little while ago, that blessed hymn about substitution, in which one line says,—

> "Now there's no load for me."

There *was* a load on me, but Jesus took my load upon himself, so—

> "Now there's no load for me."

That was the grandest of all God's transactions, when he took sin off the sinner, and laid it upon his sinless Son, as the prophet Isaiah says, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all," or as the apostle Paul says, "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Yes, the sinner, who believes in Jesus, is no longer accounted guilty by God; though black as night before, the moment he looks to Christ, he becomes white as the newly-fallen snow. Though he was a stranger to God, and condemned for his sin, as soon as he believes, he becomes "accepted in the Beloved," and he may shout with the apostle Paul, "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."

The stripes of Jesus are also *an infallible remedy for the disease of despair*. What thousands of men and women, in this world, have been ready to lay violent hands upon themselves while under a sense of sin! They never had even half a glimpse of comfort till they were told that Jesus took their sin, and carried it, in his own body, up to the tree, and there for ever made an end of it, that they might be saved. I should like those, who do not believe in Christ's substitution for sinners, to have to deal with some troubled souls who have come to me. Ah! ye may conjure, and ye may charm, ye may use fine language, and talk about the "moral influence" of the sacrifice of Christ; but what will all that avail those who are on the borders of despair? Will you take from us, who have to deal with sin-sick souls, the only balm we have to give them? I have done with Christianity, I have done with the Bible, I have done with all preaching, if you can once convince me that the substitution of Christ is not a fact. This truth is, to me, the kernel, the core, the marrow, the vital essence of the gospel. With this remedy in my hands, I can turn despair into confidence; but, take this away, and there remains nothing for me to preach to the despondent and the despairing. Let the man, who can disprove it,—if disproved it can be, and that I do not believe;—recollect that he will have taken away from the sky of many of us the only sun that shines, and from our life the only joy we have; for, if this truth be gone, all is gone. O bleeding Saviour, if thou didst not suffer in our stead, it would have been better for us if we had never been born! But we know that thy stripes *do* heal the disease of despair, so we will still pass on the remedy to all whom we find in that terrible condition.

Bring the stripes of Jesus home to a man; they heal his soul of a thousand other ills, such as this,—*the idea of trifling with sin*. That is a very common disease; it is incidental to sin that men sin, and think nothing of it. "Oh!" they say, "what is sin? We are poor frail creatures, and we make mistakes; but what of that?" That is man's estimate of sin; but, O thou bleeding Son of God, when we once get a clear view of thy wounds,—

"Sin doth like itself appear."

See God's only-begotten Son dying on the cross, that sin may be put away; and you will never again think it a trifle. The sacrifice of Calvary was upon a scale so vast that there is no human method of measuring it. God, the Creator, and Provider, and Judge of all, has taken upon himself our nature, and made expiation for our sin by his own death in the midst of the utmost ignominy, and shame, and agony. Now, sin could not have been a little thing to need such an atonement as that to put it away; and the man, who believes in Jesus, henceforth looks on sin in the right light, and never trifles with it again.

It also corrects his estimate as to eternal things. The other day, he said, "What do I care about heaven or hell? What is the day of judgment to me? These are bugbears to frighten children. What is it to me whether God is angry or not? Eternal things are for old women to think about; I mind the main chance, and make all the

money I can." Ah, but a sight of Christ on the cross cures all that! Now, eternity seems to be everything, and time insignificant. Now, to be reconciled to God, to live to his glory, seems to be the one thing needful. The cross of Christ is the great rectifier of human judgments. We trifle no longer with eternal things, but they become of infinite concern to us.

Then, next, *the wounds of Jesus cure us of the love of sin.* By nature, we love sin; but when we understand what sin cost Christ, we cannot love it any longer. If you had a very favourite knife, which you prized much, but someone took it, and with it murdered your mother, you would loathe the instrument with which so foul a deed was done; and sin, that you prized, and played with, has the blood of Christ on it. It cut him to the very soul. So now you hate it; you say to yourself, "How can I love that cursed thing that made my Saviour bleed?" There is no cure for the love of sin like the blood of Christ.

And it cures us, yet again, because *it rouses the dull, inanimate soul, which had long been indifferent to God, into life and love.* When a man knows that Jesus died for him, he must love him, and serve him; he cannot help doing so. You may tell him about the punishment of sin in terms of terror, and you may describe the glory of God in the most glowing language; but you cannot win a human heart so. The deaf adder will not hear with such charming; but, O Jesus, if thou dost say to a sinner, with thine own lips, "I love thee, and I have given myself for thee," the iceberg-soul thaws into feeling, the granite begins to throb, and the man says, "Love thee, my Saviour? Oh, how can I have lived so long without loving thee? Love thee?

> "'Yes, I love thee, and adore,
> Oh, for grace to love thee more!'"

Nothing cures the heart of coldness towards God like a sense of blood-bought pardon; but that will dissolve a heart of stone.

And so, let me add, there is no form of mischief, which sin takes, but the stripes of Jesus, when we come to know them, will heal us of them. If you love the world too much,—ay, if you love it at all,—come and drink from my Master's cup; and it will make you feel yourself a stranger in the earth, and you will set no store by this world any more. If you have been redeemed, you must have been a slave, so you will bow yourself in the dust with gratitude to your Redeemer. We see advertisements of medicines which are said to cure all diseases, but this is a medicine which *will* cure all ills. There is no form of the disease of sin upon which the stripes of Christ have not been tried, and the wondrous medicine has healed in every instance. Oh, whom has it not healed? We have seen the harlot healed, and she has become a joyous Magdalen, singing chastely and sweetly the love-song unto him that washed her from her sins in his own blood. We have seen the thief touched with this sacred heal-all, and he has become a saint amidst the seraphim above. We have seen a persecutor, who has but taken a draught of this medicine, and he has begun to preach; and he has preached right on, and he has said, "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this

grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." Ay, we have seen men lying at the very gates of hell, in their own estimation, despairing, feeling the serpents of remorse twisting their desperate coils about them everywhere, and the venom coursing through their blood; and they have lifted up themselves, and smiled, and the serpents have dropped off them, as they have looked to the Son of man, as the bitten Israelites looked to the brazen serpent; and they have been healed at once. I would that any here, who doubt this, would try it for themselves. "Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good," for there never was a soul yet, that did receive this medicine of the stripes of Jesus, who was not thereby healed.

IV. Now, to close, WHAT IS NEEDFUL IN ORDER TO GET THIS HEALING? The answer is, first, *thou must believe this to be true.* Thou must believe in the wondrous mystery of God Incarnate. There were many witnesses to Christ's incarnation and death, and there are four narrators of the story of his life and sacrifice; there were many who saw Jesus risen from the dead, and saw him till he rose to heaven; they knew that they saw him, and many of them died as martyrs because they said so. They were simple, honest witnesses,—not ecclesiastics trained in twisting language and inventing fictions. They were fishermen, and many of them, poor men, with a few of another rank, but they all saw Jesus, and they saw his miracles; they saw him tread the sea, and they saw him die, and saw him after he was risen, and they tracked him till he went up into glory; and they received his Spirit; and, in his name, they wrought miracles; and they were quite sure that what they testified was true. Some of us have believed their testimony, and we have been healed by this medicine; and if you would be healed, you must receive it yourselves.

I think I hear you say, "Why, I have always believed the Bible to be true." Well, then, next, *you must take the medicine.* What does the physician put at the beginning of his prescription? A great R, to stand for the Latin word "*Recipe.*" What does that mean? "*Take.*" "*Take* of such-and-such, a drug so much, and of another, so much." That is what the gospel says: "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." That word I leave with you, *Recipe,*—take,—receive. Take what? Why, take the sufferings of Christ to be instead of thy sufferings. Trust thou in him to save thee now because he died for all who trust him. Rest thyself on him now.

"Suppose I should trust him, and he should not save me?" Ah, soul, that were to suppose him to be a liar, and that cannot be. He that believeth in him is not condemned; or, as he put it himself, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Thou hast to come to him just as thou art, and trust him to save thee, relying upon the merit of his blood and righteousness to stand for thee before the justice of God. Canst thou do that? "Why!" says one, "it seems so simple." And are you going to quarrel with it because it is simple? Are you as foolish as Naaman, who would not wash in Jordan, because it was so simple? He wanted the prophet to perform a great many ceremonies, but he would not at first bring himself down to wash, that he might be clean.

Surely, my friend, you are not such a fool as that; I will give you credit for more sense. "But do you really mean that, if I trust my soul with Christ, believing he can save me, I am saved?" Mean it? Mean it? If that be not so, I am not saved myself, for this is where I stand. I have believed in Jesus Christ, and rested myself on him; and if he does not, cannot, or will not save me, and I should ultimately be ashamed of my hope, I must be damned, for I have not a second hope. You have heard of the fox that had three holes to run to; but the Christian has only one; and if that is stopped up, "There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

I do not know what you think about sermons; perhaps you imagine that preaching is very easy work. It is not so to me. After having been laid aside, I tell you that, if I could crawl to this pulpit on my hands and knees, it would be a delight to me once again to tell out my Master's gospel; but, at the same time, I do feel that I may have very few more opportunities of preaching, and, as the Lord liveth, before whom I stand, my anxious desire is that, every time I preach, I may clear myself of the blood of all men;—that, if I step from this platform to my coffin, I may have told out, at least, all I knew of the way of salvation. I wish you unconverted ones could bring yourselves to take this word home to yourselves; for, some day, you will hear the gospel for the last time; you will listen to the last invitation; and this may be the last time you will hear the story of the dying Saviour. Will you have him now, or not? With some of you, it is now or never! Hark to the ticking of the clock! As the pendulum swings to and fro, it says to some of you, "Now or never! Now or never! Now or never! Now or never!" Wilt thou trust thy soul with Jesus? If thou wilt, the soft persuasions of his blessed Spirit are guiding thee that way. Cast thy guilty soul on him, and thou art saved; but if thou wilt have another saviour, or be thine own saviour, and reject Christ, I am clear of thy blood; and when we stand before that dread tribunal, when heaven and earth shall shake, and reel, and pass away like a mist before the rising sun, you will have no one but yourself to blame that you are lost. God save you, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen!

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

MATTHEW XXVII. 27—54.

Verses 27—30. *Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto him the whole band of soldiers. And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe. And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head.*

Ridicule is very painful to bear at any time, and soldiers have been masters of that cruel art when they have been encouraged in it by their leaders. Remember, brethren and sisters, who it was that bore all this

shameful treatment from these brutal men,—your Lord and the angels' Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth, who had deigned, for a while, to veil his Deity in human flesh. And there he stood, to be "set at nought,"—to be made nothing of,—by those rough Roman legionaries, the creatures of his own hand, whom he could have destroyed in a moment by a word or a wish. What matchless condescension our gracious Redeemer displayed even in his own deepest degradation and agony!

31, 32. *And after that they had mocked him, they took the robe off from him, and put his own raiment on him, and led him away to crucify him. And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name: him they compelled to bear his cross.*

And methinks that he must have been a glad man to have such an honour thrust upon him; yet you need not envy him, for there is a cross for you also to carry. Bear it cheerfully. If anything happens to you, by way of ridicule, for Christ's sake and the gospel's, bow your shoulder willingly to the burden; and, as knights are made by a stroke from a sword held in their sovereign's hand, so shall you be made princes of the realm of Christ by bearing the cross after him.

33. *And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say, a place of a skull,—*

We do not know why it was so called. There have been many conjectures concerning the name, but they are only conjectures. It was probably just a little knoll, outside the gate of the city,—the common place of execution for malefactors; and the special points to be noted are that Jesus suffered without the gate, in the regular place of doom,—the Tyburn or Old Bailey of Jerusalem,—and so was numbered with the transgressors.

34. *They gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall:*

A stupefying draught was usually given to the criminals who were crucified, to mitigate their agony; but Christ did not wish for that to be done in his case.

34. *And when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink.*

He came to earth that he might suffer, and he would retain all his faculties while suffering; he would have every nerve made into a straight road for the hot feet of pain to travel over, for he would drink, even to the last dregs, every drop that was in the cup of suffering for his people's sin.

35, 36. *And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots. And sitting down they watched him there;*

Some of them gloating their cruel eyes with the sight of his suffering; others watching him out of mere curiosity; but there were some, hard by the cross, who stood there to weep in sympathy with him,—a sword passing through their own hearts while the Son of man was being put to death.

37. *And set up over his head his accusation written, THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.*

And so he is. When will the Jews own him as their King? They will do so one day; perhaps they will do so when Christians begin to think and speak more kindly of them than they usually do. When the hardness of heart on our part towards them shall pass away, it may be that their hardness of heart towards Christ will also pass away. Long have they been despised, and oppressed, and persecuted in many lands; oh, that, by some means, they might be brought to look, in penitence, upon him whom they crucified, and to own him as their Lord and Saviour!

38—40. *Then were there two thieves crucified with him, one on the right hand, and another on the left. And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads, and saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross.*

That is the devil's old doctrine: "Save thyself; look out for yourselves; live for yourselves; be selfish." But Christ could never act like that; he came to live and die for others. "Save thyself," was not the doctrine that he either preached or practised. And this is another old taunt of Satan and those who follow him: "If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross, and we will believe in thee." There are plenty who would be willing to believe in Christ, but not in Christ crucified. "He was a good man," say they; "a great prophet; no doubt, far in advance of his times," and so on. But, if you talk like that, you are not on safe ground, for if Christ was not the Son of God, at any rate he professed to be, and he made people think he was; and if he was not, he was an impostor, and not a good man at all. You must either repudiate Christ altogether, or take him with his cross; it must be Christ crucified, or no Christ at all.

41—44. *Likewise also the chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God. The thieves also,—*

Those abjects who were crucified with him, and were sharers of his misery,—

44—46. *Which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth. Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*

This was the climax of his grief;—not merely to suffer intense agony of body, not only to be mocked alike by priests and people; but to be forsaken of his God. Yet this was needful as a part of the penalty that was due to sin. God must turn away from anyone who has sin upon him; so, as sin was laid upon Christ, God had to turn away his face even from his well-beloved Son because he was bearing his people's sins upon the accursed tree.

47—49. *Some of them that stood there, when they heard that, said, This man calleth for Elias. And straightway one of them ran, and took a spunge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink. The rest said, Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save him.*

Mocking him even in his prayers, for they well knew the difference between Eloi and Elias.

50. *Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost.*

You know what he said when he cried with a loud voice: "It is finished."

51—54. *And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many. Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God.*

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—439, 819; AND FROM "SACRED SONGS AND SOLOS"—44.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

"CHRIST IS ALL."

A Sermon

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DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

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"Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all."—Colossians iii. 11.

PAUL is writing concerning the new creation, and he says that, in it, "There is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all." The new creation is a very different thing from the old one. Blessed are all they who have both seen the kingdom of heaven and entered into it. In the first creation, we are born of the flesh; and that which is born of the flesh is, even at the best, nothing but flesh, and can never be anything better; but, in the new creation, we are born of the Spirit, and so we become spiritual, and understand spiritual things. The new life, in Christ Jesus, is an eternal life, and it links all those who possess it with the eternal realities at the right hand of God above.

In some respects, the new creation is so like the old one that a parallel might be drawn between them; but, in far more respects, it is not at all like the old creation. Many things are absent from the new creation, which were found in the old one; and many things, which were accounted of great value in the first creation, are of little or no worth in the new; while many distinctions, which were greatly prized in the old creation, are treated as mere insignificant trifles in the new creation. The all-important thing is for each one of us to put to himself or herself the question, "Do I know what it is to have been renewed in knowledge after the image of him who creates anew? Do I know what it is to have been born twice, to have been born again, born from above, by the effectual working of God the Holy Spirit? Do I understand what it is to have spiritually entered a new world wherein dwelleth righteousness?" It is concerning this great truth that I am going to speak; and, first, I shall say something upon *what is obliterated in the new creation;* and, secondly, upon *what stands in its stead.*

I. First, as to WHAT IS OBLITERATED IN THE NEW CREATION: "There is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free."

That is to say, first, in the kingdom of Christ, *there is an obliteration of all national distinctions.* I suppose there will always be national distinctions, in the world, until Christ comes, even if they should all be terminated then. The mischief was wrought when men tried to build the city and tower, in the plain of Shinar, and so brought Babel, or confusion into the world. The one family became transformed into many,—a necessary evil to prevent a still greater one. The unity at Babel would have been far worse than the confusion has ever been, just as the spiritual union of Babylon, that is, Rome, the Papal system, has been infinitely more mischievous, to the Church and to the world, than the division of Christians into various sects and parties could ever have been. Babel has not been an altogether unmitigated evil; it has, no doubt, wrought a certain amount of good, and prevented colossal streams of evil from reaching a still more awful culmination. Still, the separation is, in itself, an evil; and it is, therefore, in the Lord's own time and way, to be done away with; and, spiritually, it is already abolished. In the Church of Christ, wherever there is real union of heart among believers, nationality is no hindrance to true Christian fellowship. I feel just as much love toward any brother or sister in Christ, who is not of our British race, as I do toward our own Christian countrymen and countrywomen; indeed, I sometimes think I feel even more the force of the spiritual union when I catch the Swiss tone, or the French, or the German, breaking out in the midst of the English, as we often do here, thank God. I seem to feel all the more interest in these beloved brethren and sisters because of the little difference in nationality that there is between us. Certainly, brethren, in any part of the true Church of Christ, all national distinctions are swept away, and we "are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God."

Under the Christian dispensation, the distinction or division of nationality has gone from us in this sense. We once had our national heroes; each nation still glories in its great men of the heroic age, or in its mythical heroes; but the one Champion and Hero of Christianity is our Lord Jesus Christ, who has slain our dragon foes, routed all our adversaries, broken down the massive fortress of our great enemy, and set the captives free. We sing no longer of the valiant deeds of our national heroes,—St. George, St. Andrew, St. Patrick, St. Denis, and the other "saints" so-called, who were either only legendary, or else anything but "saints" as we understand the term. We sing the prowess of the King of all saints, the mighty Son of David, who is worthy of our loftiest minstrelsy. King Arthur and the knights of the round table, we are quite willing to forget when we think of "another King, one Jesus," and of another table, where they who sit are not merely good knights of Jesus Christ, but are made kings and priests unto him who sits at the head of the festal board. Barbarian, Scythian,

Greek, Jew,—these distinctions are all gone so far as we are concerned, for we are all one in Christ Jesus. We boast not of our national or natural descent, or of the heroes whose blood may be in our veins; it is enough for us that Christ has lived, and Christ has died, and Christ has "spoiled principalities and powers," and trampled down sin, death, and hell, even as he fell amid the agonies of Calvary.

Away, too, has gone all our national history, so far as there may have been any desire to exalt it for the purpose of angering Christian brethren and sisters of another race. I wish that even the names of wars and famous battlefields could be altogether forgotten; but if they do remain in the memories of those of us who are Christians, we will not boast as he did who said, "But 'twas a famous victory;" nor will we proudly sing of—

"The flag that braved a thousand years
The battle and the breeze."

As Christians, our true history begins—nay, I must correct myself, for it had no beginning except in that dateless eternity when the Divine Trinity in Unity conceived the wondrous plan of predestinating grace, electing love, the substitutionary sacrifice of the Son of God for the sins of his chosen people, the full and free justification of all who believe, and the eternal glory of the whole redeemed family of God. This is our past, present, and future history; we, who are Christians, take down the Volume of the Book wherein these things are written, and we make our boast in the Lord, and thus the boasting is not sinful.

As to laws and customs, of which each nation has its own, it is not wrong for a Christian to take delight in a good custom which has been long established, or earnestly to contend for the maintenance of ancient laws; which have preserved inviolate the liberty of the people age after age; but, still, the customs of Christians are learned from the example of Christ, and the laws of believers are the precepts laid down by him. When we are dealing with matters relating to the Church of Christ, we have no English customs, or French customs, or American customs, or German customs; or, if we have, we should let them go, and have only Christian customs henceforth. Did our Lord Jesus Christ command anything? Then, let it be done. Did he forbid anything? Then, away with it. Would he smile upon a certain action? Then, perform it at once. Would he frown upon it? Then, mind that you do the same. Blessed is the believer who has realized that the laws and customs for the people of God to observe are plainly written out in the life of Christ, and that he has become to us, now, "all, and in all."

Christ, by giving liberty to all his people, has also obliterated the distinctions of nationality which we once located in various countries. One remembers, with interest, the old declaration, "*Romanus sum*," ("I am a Roman,") for a citizen of Rome, wherever he might be, felt that he was a free man whom none would dare to hurt, else Roman legions would ask the reason why; and an Englishman, in every country, wherever he may be, still feels that

he is one who was born free, and who would sooner die than become a slave, or hold another man or woman in slavery. But, brethren and sisters, there is a higher liberty than this,—the liberty wherewith Christ has made his people free; and when we come into the Church of God, we talk about that liberty, and we believe that Christians, even if they had not the civil and religious rights which we possess, would still be as free in Christ as we are. There are still many, in various parts of the world, who do not enjoy the liberties that we have; who, notwithstanding their bonds, are spiritually free; for, as the Son hath made them free, they are free indeed.

Christ also takes from us all inclination or power to boast of our national prestige. To me, it is prestige enough to be a Christian;—to bear the cross Christ gives me to carry, and to follow in the footsteps of the great Cross-bearer. What is the power, in which some boast, of sending soldiers and cannon to a distant shore, compared with the almighty power wherewith Christ guards the weakest of us who dares to trust him? What reason is there for a man to be lifted up with conceit just because he happens to have been born in this or that highly-favoured country? What is such a privilege compared with the glories which appertain to the man who is born again from above, who is an heir of heaven, a child of God through faith in Jesus Christ, and who can truthfully say, "All things are mine, and I am Christ's, and Christ is God's"?

What is the wondrous internationalism that levels all these various nationalities in the Church of Christ, and makes us all one in him? Spiritually, we have all been born in one country; the New Jerusalem is the mother of us all. It is not my boast that I am a citizen of this or that earthly city or town here; it is my joy that I am one of the citizens of "a city which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God." Christ has fired all of us, who are his people, with a common enthusiasm. He has revealed himself to each one of us as he doth not unto the world; and, in the happy remembrance that we belong to him, we forget that we are called by this or that national name, and only remember that he is our Lord, and that we are to follow where he leads the way. He has pointed us to heaven, as the leader of the Goths and Huns pointed his followers to Italy, and said, "There is the country whence come the luscious wines of which you have tasted. Go, and take the vineyards, and grow the vines for yourselves;" and so they forgot that they belonged to various tribes, and they all united under the one commander who promised to lead them on to the conquest of the rich land for which they panted. And now, we, who are in Christ Jesus, having tasted of the Eshcol clusters which grow in the heavenly Canaan, follow our glorious Leader and Commander, as the Israelites followed Joshua, forgetting that we belong to so many different tribes, but knowing that there is an inheritance reserved in heaven for all who follow where Jehovah-Jesus leads the way.

The next thing to be observed, in our text, is that *ceremonial distinctions are obliterated.* When Paul says that "there is neither

circumcision nor uncircumcision," he recalls the fact that, under the law, there were some who were peculiarly the children of promise, to whom were committed the oracles of God; but there is no such thing as that now. Then there were others, who stood outside the pale of the law,—the sinners of the Gentiles, who were left in darkness until their time for receiving the light should come; but Christ has fused these two into one; and, now, in his Church, "there is neither Greek nor Jew." I marvel at the insanity of those who try to prove that we are Jews,—the lost ten tribes, forsooth! I grant you that the business transactions of a great many citizens of London afford some support to the theory, but it is only a theory, and a very crazy one, too. But suppose they were able to prove that we are of the seed of Abraham, after the flesh, it would not make any difference to us, for we are expressly told that "there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision," for all believers are one in Christ Jesus. The all-important consideration is,—Are we Christians? Do we really believe in Jesus Christ, to the salvation of our souls? The apostle truly says, "Christ is all," for he has done away with all the distinctions that formerly existed between Jews and Gentiles. He has levelled down and he has levelled up. First he has levelled down the Jews, and made them stand in the same class as the Gentiles, shutting them up under the custody of the very law in which they gloried, and making them see that they can never come out of that bondage except by using the key of faith in Christ. So our Lord Jesus has stopped the mouths of both Jews and Gentiles, and made them stand equally guilty before God; for, on the other hand, he has levelled up the outcast and despised Gentiles, and has admitted us to all the privileges of his ancient covenant, making us to be heirs of Abraham, in a spiritual sense, "though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not." He has given to us all the blessings which belong to Abraham's seed, because we, too, possess like precious faith as the father of the faithful himself had. So, "now in Christ Jesus we who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace." Oh, what a blessing it is that all national and ceremonial distinctions are gone for ever, and that "Christ is all" to all who believe in him!

A more difficult point, perhaps, is that of *social distinctions;* but that also has gone from the Church of Christ. "There is neither bond nor free," says the apostle. Well, blessed be God, slavery has almost ceased to exist. Among Christians, it has become a by-word and a proverb, though there was a time when some of them pleaded for it as a divinely-ordained institution. But, oh, may the last vestige of it speedily disappear, and may every man see it to be both his duty and his privilege to yield to his brother-man his God-given rights and liberties! Yet, even in such a free country as ours happily is, there are still distinctions between one

class and another, and I expect there always will be. I do not suppose there ever can be, in this world, any system, even if we could have the profoundest philosophers to invent it, in which everybody will be equal. Or, if they ever should be all equal, they would not remain so for more than five minutes. We are not all equal in our form, and shape, and capacity, and ability; and we never shall be. We could not have the various members of our body all equal; if we had such an arrangement as that, our body would be a monstrosity. There are some members of the body which must have a more honourable office and function than others have; but all the members are in the body, and necessary to its due proportion. So is it in the Church of Christ, which is his mystical body; yet, brethren, how very, very minute are the distinctions between the various members of that body! You, my brother, are rich, as the world reckons riches. Well, do not boast of your wealth, for riches are very apt to take to themselves wings, and fly away. Probably, more of you are poor so far as worldly wealth is concerned. Well, then, do not murmur, for "all things are yours" if you are Christ's; and, soon, you will be where you will know nothing of poverty again for ever and ever. True Christianity practically wipes out all these distinctions by saying, "This man, as one of Christ's stewards, has more of his Lord's money entrusted to him than others have, so he is bound to do more with it than they do with their portion; he must give away more than they do." This other man has far less than his rich brother, but Christ says that he is responsible for the right use of what he hath, and not for what he hath not. As the poor widow's two mites drop into the treasury of the Lord, he receives her gift with as sweet a smile as that which he accorded to the lavish gifts of David and Solomon. In his Church, Christ teaches us that, if we have more than others, we simply hold it in trust for those who have less than we have; and I believe that some of the Lord's children are poor in order that there may be an opportunity for their fellow-Christians to minister to them out of their abundance. We could not prove our devotion to Christ, in practical service such as he best loves, if there were not needy ones whom we could succour and support. Our Lord has told us how he will say, in the great day of account, "I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat;" but that could not be the case if there was not one of the least of his brethren, who was hungry, and whom we could feed for his sake. "I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink." But he could not say that if none of his poor brethren were thirsty. "I was sick, and ye visited me." So, there must be sick saints to be visited, and cases of distress, of various kinds, to be relieved; otherwise, there could not be the opportunity of practically proving our love to our Lord. In the Church of Christ, it ought always to be so, brethren; we should love each other with a pure heart fervently; we should bear each other's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ; and we should care for one another, and seek, as far as we can, to supply one another's needs. The rich brother must not exalt himself above the poor one, nor must the poor Christian envy his richer brethren

and sisters in Christ; for, in him, all these distinctions are obliterated, and we sit down, at his table, as members of the one family of which he is the glorious and ever-living Head; and we dwell together in unity, praising him that national, ceremonial, and social distinctions have, for us, all passed away, and that "Christ is all, and in all."

II. Possibly, I have taken up too much of our time in describing what is obliterated from the old creation; so, now, I will try more briefly to show you WHAT TAKES ITS PLACE IN THE NEW CREATION: "Christ is all, and in all."

First, *Christ is all our culture.* Has Christianity wiped out that grand name "Greek"? Yes, in the old meaning of it; and, in some senses, it is a great pity that it is gone, for the Greek was a cultured man, the Greek's every movement was elegance itself, the Greek was the standard of classic beauty and eloquence; but Christianity has wiped all that out, and written, in its place, "Christ is all." And, brethren, the culture, the gracefulness, the beauty, the comeliness, the eloquence,—in the sight of the best Judge of all those things, namely, God, the ever-blessed,—which Christ gives to the true Christian, is better than all that Greek art or civilization ever produced, so we may cheerfully let it all go, and say, "Christ is all."

Next, *Christ is all our revelation.* There was the "Jew";—he was a fine fellow, and there is still much to admire in him. The Semitic race seems to have been specially constituted by God for devout worship; and the Jew, the descendant of believing Abraham, is still a firm believer in one part of God's Word; he is, spiritually, a staunch Conservative in that matter, the very backbone of the world's belief. Alas, that his faith is so incomplete, and that there is mingled with it so much tradition received from his fathers! Will you wipe out that name "Jew"? Yes, because we, who believe in Jesus, glory in him even as the Jew gloried in having received the oracles of God. Christ is "the Word of God" incarnate, and all the divine revelation is centered in him; and we hold fast the eternal verities which have been committed unto us, because of the power of Christ that rests upon us.

Then, next, *Christ is all our ritual.* There is no "circumcision" now. That was the special mark of those who were separated from all the rest of mankind; they bore in their body undoubted indications that they were set apart to be the Lord's peculiar possession. Someone asks, "Will you do away with that distinguishing rite?" Yes, we will; for, in Christ, every true Christian is set apart unto God, marked as Jesus Christ's special separated one by the circumcision made without hands.

Further, *Christ is all our simplicity.* Here is a man, who says that "uncircumcision" is his distinguishing mark, and adds, "I am not separated or set apart from others, as the so-called 'priest' is; I am a man among my fellow-men. Wherever I go, I can mingle with others, and feel that they are my brethren. I belong to the 'uncircumcision.' Will you rule that out?" Yes, we will, because we have, in Christ, all that uncircumcision means; for he who

becomes a real Christian is the truest of all men; he is the most free from that spirit which says, "Stand by thyself, come not near to me; for I am holier than thou." He is the true philanthropist, the real lover of men, even as Christ was. He was no separatist, in the sense in which some use that word. He went to a wedding feast; he ate bread in the house of a publican; and a woman of the city, who was a sinner, was permitted to wash his feet with her tears. He mingled with the rest of mankind, and "the common people heard him gladly;" and he would have us to be as he was, the true Man among men, the great Lover of our race.

Once more, *Christ is all our natural traditions, and our unconquerableness and liberty.* Here is "the rude barbarian", as the poet calls him; he says, "I shall never give up the free, manly life that I have lived so long. By my unshorn beard," for that is the meaning of the term Barbarian, "I swear it shall be so." "By the wild steppes and wide plains, over which I roam unconquerable," says the Scythian, "I will never bend to the conventionalities of civilization, and be the slave of your modern luxuries." Well, it is almost a pity to have done with Barbarians and Scythians, in this sense, for there is a good deal about them to be commended; but we must wipe them all out. If they come into the Church of Christ, he must be "all, and in all;" because everything that is manly, everything that is natural, everything that is free, everything that is bold, everything that is unconquerable will be put into them if "Christ is all" to them. They will get all the excellences that are in that freedom, without the faults appertaining to it.

Further, "*Christ is all*" *as our Master, if we be "bond.*" I think I see, in the great assembly at Colosse, which Paul addressed, one who said, "But I am a bond slave; a man bought me at the auction mart, and here, on my back, are the marks of the slave-holder's lash." And I think I hear him add, "I wish that disgrace could be wiped out." But Paul says, "Brother, it *is* wiped out; you are no bond slave, really, for Christ has made you free." Then the great apostle of the Gentiles comes, and sits down by his side, and says to him, "The Church of Christ has absorbed you, brother, by making us all like you; for we are all servants of one Master; and look," says Paul, as he bares his own back, and shows the scars from his repeated scourgings, "from henceforth let no man trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus." "And so," says he, laying his hand on the poor Christian slave, "I, Paul, the slave of Jesus Christ, share your servitude, and with me you are Christ's free man."

Lastly, *Christ is our Magna Charta; yea, our liberty itself if we be "free."* Here comes the free man, who was born free. Shall that clause stand, "neither bond nor free"? Oh, yes, let it stand; but not so stand that we glory in our national freedom, for Christ has given us a higher freedom. I may slightly alter the familiar couplet, and say,—

> "He is the free man whom THE LORD makes free,
> And all are slaves beside."

Oh, what multitudes of people, in London, are slaves;—miserable slaves to the opinions of their neighbours,—slaves to the caprice of Mrs. Grundy,—slaves to "respectability"! Some of you dare not do a thing that you know to be right, because somebody might make a remark about it. What are you but slaves? Ay, and there are slaves in the pulpit, every Sunday, who dare not speak the truth for fear somebody should be offended; and there are also slaves in the pews, and slaves in the shops, and slaves all around. What a wretched life a slave lives! Yet, till you become a Christian, and know what it is to wear Christ's bonds about your willing wrists, you will always feel the galling fetters of society, and the bonds of custom, fashion, or this or that. But Jesus makes us free with a higher freedom, so we wipe out the mere terrestrial freedom, which is too often only a sham, and we write, "Christ is all."

So, to conclude, remember that, if you have Christ as your Saviour, you do not need anybody else to save you. I see an old gentleman, over there in Rome, with a triple crown on his head. We do not want him, for "Christ is all." He says that he is the vicegerent of God; that is not true; but if it were, it would not matter, for "Christ is all," so we can do without the Pope. Then I see another gentleman, with an all-round dog collar of the Roman kennel type; and he tells me that, if I will confess my sins to him as the priest of the parish, he can give me absolution; but, seeing that "Christ is all," we can do without that gentleman as well as the other one; for anything that is over and above "all" must be a superfluity, if nothing worse. So is it with everything that is beside or beyond Christ; faith can get to Christ without Pope or priest. Everything that is outside Christ is a lie, for "Christ is all." All that is true must be inside him, so we can do without all others in the matter of our soul's salvation.

But supposing that we have not received Christ as our Saviour, then how unspeakably poor we are! If we have not grasped Christ by faith, we have not laid hold of anything, for "Christ is all;" and if we have not him who is all, we have nothing at all. "Oh!" says one, "I am a regular chapel-goer." Yes; so far, so good; but if you have not Christ, you have nothing, for "Christ is all." "But I have been baptized," says another. Ah! but if you have not savingly trusted in Christ, your baptism is only another sin added to all your others. "But I go to communion," says another. So much the worse for you if you have not trusted in Christ as your Saviour. I wish I could put this thought into the heart of everyone here who is without Christ,—nay, I pray the Holy Spirit to impress this thought upon your heart,—if you are without Christ, you are without everything that is worth having, for "Christ is all."

But, Christians, I would like to make your hearts dance by reminding you that, if you have Christ as your Saviour, you are rich to all the intents of bliss, for you have "all" that your heart can wish to have. Nobody else can say as much as that; the richest man in the world has only got something, though the

something may be very great. Alexander conquered one world; but you, believer, in getting Christ as yours, have this world and also that which is to come, life and death, time and eternity. Oh, revel in the thought that, as Christ is yours, you are rich to an infinity of riches, for "Christ is all."

Now, if Christ really is yours, and as Christ is all, then love him, and honour him, and praise him. Mother, what were you doing this afternoon? Pressing that dear child of yours to your bosom, and saying, "She is my all"? Take back those words, for they are not true. If you love Christ, he is your all, and you cannot have another "all." Someone else has one who is very near and very dear. If you are that someone else, and you have said in your heart, "He is my all," or "She is my all," you have done wrong, for nothing and no one but Christ must be your "all." You will be an idolater, and you will grieve the Holy Spirit, if anything, or anyone, except Christ, becomes your "all." You, who have lately lost your loved ones, and you, who have been brought low by recent losses in business, are you fretting over your losses? If so, remember that you have not lost your "all." You still have Christ, and he is "all." Then, what have you lost? Yes, I know that you have something to grieve over; but, after all, your "light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;" therefore, comfort yourself with this thought,—"I have not really lost anything, for I still have all." When you have all things, find Christ in all; and when you have lost all things, then find all things in Christ. I do not know, but I think that the latter is the better of the two.

Now, if Christ be all, then, beloved brethren and sisters, let us live for him. If he is all, let us spend our strength, and be ready to lay down the last particle of it that we have, and to die for him; and then let us, whenever we need anything, go to him for it, for "Christ is all." Let us draw upon this bank, for its resources are infinite; we shall never exhaust them.

Lastly, and chiefly, let us send our hearts right on to where he is. Where our treasure is, there should our hearts be also. Come, my heart, up and away! What hast thou here that can fill thee? What hast thou here that can satisfy thee? Plume thy wings, and be up and away, for there is thy roosting-place; there is the tree of life which never can be felled. Up and away, and build there for ever! The Lord help each one of you to do so, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

ISAIAH XLIII. 1—25.

Verse 1. *But now thus saith the* LORD *that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine.*

I cannot pause to comment upon each of the precious sentences here, but every word is full of marrow and fatness. Ask the Lord to enable you to feed upon each sentence as it passes before your mind.

2—5. *When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the* LORD *thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour: I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee. Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life. Fear not: for I am with thee:*

That always seems to me to be the master-consolation: "I am with thee." What more does the most troubled heart need than God's presence?

5. *I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west;*

O Church of God, thine elect members shall all, in due time, be fetched in, however far they may have wandered!

6, 7. *I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth; even every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him.*

And that in a double sense, for God's people are twice made;—made first in creation, but marred by the fall; and then new-made as "new creatures in Christ Jesus."

8. *Bring forth the blind people that have eyes, and the deaf that have ears.*

There are plenty of them, for our proverb is true, "There are none so blind as those that will not see, and none so deaf as those that will not hear." But even to such people as these God makes his appeal.

9. *Let all the nations be gathered together, and let the people be assembled: who among them can declare this, and shew us former things? let them bring forth their witnesses, that they may be justified: or let them hear, and say, It is truth.*

God challenges all the false gods and their worshippers to produce a single fulfilled prophecy,—to show one instance in which they have truly and correctly foretold any event or a chain of events; but all Jehovah's prophecies have been fulfilled, or will be, in due season.

10—13. *Ye are my witnesses, saith the* LORD, *and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. I, even I, am the* LORD; *and beside me there is no saviour. I have declared, and have saved, and I have shewed, when there was no strange god among you: therefore ye are my witnesses, saith the* LORD, *that I am God. Yea, before the day was I am he; and there is none that can deliver out of my hand: I will work, and who shall let it?*

It is a great blessing to know that the Lord is God; and not merely to know that as a matter of fact, but to feel it, to realize it, and to trust in God and act towards him conscious that he, and he alone, is the living and true God.

14—17. *Thus saith the* LORD, *your redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; For your sake I have sent to Babylon, and have brought down all their nobles, and the Chaldeans, whose cry is in the ships. I am the* LORD, *your Holy One, the creator of Israel, your King. Thus saith the* LORD, *which maketh a way in the sea, and a path in the mighty waters; which bringeth forth the chariot and horse, the army and the power; they shall lie down together, they shall not rise: they are extinct, they are quenched as tow.*

You know what happened to the army of Sennacherib when it came against Jerusalem. Horses and chariots were there in vast numbers, and all the pomp and pageantry of a vast host of armed men; but they slept their last sleep, from which they never rose again, when the angel of the Lord flew through their ranks. So was it with Babylon itself. When the

set time came, that long-established empire, with its colossal power, was swept away like a vision of the night. It blazed like tow, and then was quenched for ever. What cannot God do for his people when he uplifts his almighty arm?

18. *Remember ye not the former things, neither consider the things of old.*

For something better is going to be done in the future than all that God has done in the past. He will eclipse all his previous achievements, and outdo the mightiest of his own miracles.

19, 20. *Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert. The beast of the field shall honour me,*

As it slakes its thirst at an unwonted spring,—

20. *The dragons and the owls:*

Alarmed and startled, as God's people pass by on their way to the land which God would give them,—

20—22. *Because I give waters in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert, to give drink to my people, my chosen. This people have I formed for myself; they shall shew forth my praise. But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob;—*

Have any of you restrained prayer of late? Has your path to the mercy-seat been but little trodden? Then, listen to God's gentle rebuke: "Thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob;"—

22. *But thou hast been weary of me, O Israel.*

Weary of God! Have any of us grown weary of fellowship with him, weary of his truth, weary of his day, weary of his service? Oh, what strange ingratitude this is on our part!

23. *Thou hast not brought me the small cattle of thy burnt offerings; neither hast thou honoured me with thy sacrifices.*

There are some of God's people, at any rate, who forget to offer their sacrifices unto God. If they do love Christ at all, their love is not practical, not self-sacrificing; it does not lead them to bring love-gifts unto him.

23. *I have not caused thee to serve with an offering, nor wearied thee with incense.*

"I have made no irksome tax of it. I have not demanded anything of you. I have left it to your own free will to give according as your love suggests."

24. *Thou hast bought me no sweet cane with money, neither hast thou filled me with the fat of thy sacrifices: but—*

Alas! instead of good, there has been evil.

24. *Thou hast made me to serve with thy sins,*

What! made God our servant, when we ought to have served him? Alas! I fear it is often so even with some of his own people.

24. *Thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities.*

O sirs, how sad it is when God's people are weary of him and he is weary of them! What shall we read after this? Surely the next sentence will be a thunder-clap, and a lightning flash will blaze out of the sacred page! Listen, and be amazed at the mercy of the Lord.

25. *I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.*

What a blessed God to deal so graciously with his ungrateful erring people!

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Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

CHRIST RECEIVING SINNERS.

A Sermon

PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JUNE 23RD, 1904,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On a Lord's-day Evening, during the winter of 1861—2.

"And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples."—Matt. ix. 10.

How strangely different was our Lord Jesus Christ from the philosophers of Greece! They were reserved in their demeanour; eclectic, or studiously choice, in their tastes; and jealous of contact with their fellow-creatures. Retiring from the busy haunts of men, to encircle themselves with an atmosphere created by their own breath, they wanted none in their society but those who were fit companions for men so exalted in wisdom. Their disciples looked up to them with profound and obsequious reverence; and they themselves, in their various halls and classrooms, talked as men might who were teaching little children, and their pupils were completely subject to their dictation; but they always kept "the common people" at a distance, for they concerned not themselves to instruct the many, but only to teach the few who were ambitious to become wise like themselves.

Our blessed Lord and Master was no philosopher of this sort, shut up with his few disciples by themselves. He had his chosen twelve, but he and they mingled freely with the populace. He was a man among men, and not a philosopher among those shut out from men. True, he taught greater wisdom than all the sages knew, and better philosophy than all the wise men of Greece understood; but, still, he was familiar with the people, tender-hearted, mild, and of a gentle spirit. We have an instance of this here, where we read of Jesus doing what Solon or Socrates would never have done; for he sat down to take a meal with the common people round about him, eating with publicans and sinners.

How different, moreover, we may add, was Christ from the great prophets of the olden time! With the utmost stretch of imagination, you cannot conceive of Moses sitting down to eat with sinners. He was a king in Jeshurun; an awful majesty surrounded the

prophet of Horeb, who was mighty in word and deed. Wherever he went, he appeared as the man whom his high office had exalted above his fellows. His whole character, like his face on that memorable occasion when he had been in the mount with God, shone so brilliantly that ordinary men could scarcely gaze upon him unless he covered his face with a veil. More than once, he was hidden in complete seclusion with God. True, he was accessible enough, in the due exercise of his office, to all who had complaints or charges to be decided at the bar where he presided as judge; but who would presume to think of being a companion to the mighty Moses? Even his brother Aaron and his sister Miriam seem to have had a great gulf fixed between them and their truly regal brother; they could not approach him without becoming deference, nor could he come down to be on a social level with them.

Think also of Elijah, the very pattern and model of a prophet of the Most High God. How high he towered above the men of his age! The fire, which Elijah called from heaven upon the Carmel sacrifice, and upon the captains of fifties and their fifties, seemed to be a fitting type of his own character. One can admire him as a prophet, and follow him as a leader, but who could think of having him as a companion and friend? Stern, unflinching, faithful, he has little or no pity for the sinner; the only thing that an erring man could say to Elijah would be what Ahab said to him, "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?" His sternness in rebuking sin, his bold, thundering denunciation of idolatry, made men tremble before him; and we can hardly imagine that publicans and sinners would have been anxious to sit down to eat with him.

But, my brethren, the Christ, whose gospel we preach, is no unapproachable philosopher. The glory of his person reflects even a brighter lustre than the dignity of his office. He appeared among men, not as one who had been lifted up from the ranks to obtain a position for himself, but as one who bowed himself down from the heaven of heavens that he might bring blessings to the sons of men; yet the ignorant and the illiterate may find in him their best Friend. He is no stern law-giver, like Moses, who, wrapping around himself the robe of his own integrity, looks upon the transgressor simply with the eye of justice; neither is he merely the pitiless denouncer of iniquity and crime, or the bold enunciator of penalty and punishment. Christ is the gentle Lover of our souls; the good Shepherd, coming forth, not so much to slay the wolf as to save the sheep. As a nurse tenderly watcheth over the child committed to her charge, so doth Jesus watch over the souls of men; and like as a father pitieth his children, so doth he pity sinful men. He does not stand upon a lofty height, and bid sinners ascend to him; but, coming down from the mountain, and mingling in social intercourse with them, he draws them to himself by the magnetic force of his almighty love. "Jesus, the sinners' Friend,"—that is his true title, for that is what he really is. O Jesus, may we personally know thee as our Friend just now! We are sinners; be thou our Friend.

Before I come directly to the subject, I want to paint three pictures, in order to show you, by the force of contrast, the way in

which Christ, *the* Physician of souls, really cures and heals. There have been various schemes for cleansing society from the pollution that comes through sin. Even men, who were themselves sinners, have been conscious that iniquity so saps and undermines the foundations of society that it must, if possible, be uprooted and destroyed. Behold the many schemes which men have devised for this purpose; listen to the voices which have charmed men's ears, and awed their hearts, but have not been able to change for the better their condition.

First came *Severity*, and he said, "There is a plague broken out among the people; clear out the tainted ones. There are the fatal spots upon their brows, the venom of the dread disease has worked its way to their skin, there is no doubt about their being infected; therefore, smite them, slay them, let them be destroyed. Take them away, executioner; it is better that they should be put to death than that the whole nation should perish. Cut off the few sickly sheep lest the whole flock should be affected." But the Saviour came, and he said, "Nay, nay, not so; wherefore will ye destroy them? If ye do so, the disease will be spread all the more, for their blood shall be spattered on the men who slay them, and shall infect their executioners; and they, in their turn, will come back, and infect the man who condemned the plague-stricken to be slain; and here, in the very hall of judgment, the signs of the dread disease shall be seen even upon the judge's brow. Wherefore deal ye thus hardly with your brethren? Ye are all yourselves diseased; there is a plague upon every one of you. If ye thus begin to uproot some of the tares, ye may not only uproot the wheat, but ye may uproot the whole field, which, after all, might bring forth something which would be better than absolute sterility. Nay, spare them, spare them; let them not die; give them into my hands." His request was, of course, granted, and he went to those whom he had rescued, and he said, "Your forfeited lives are spared. It is well known that, according to the laws of your fellow-men, you deserve to die; but I have undertaken that, without the violation of law, you shall escape." Then he touched them, and healed their running sores, and said to all who stood near, "Now these men shall spread life through your ranks, for I have restored them from their sickness; and now, instead of being to you well-springs of everything that is abominable and filthy, they shall become fountains of everything that is lovely, and pure, and of good repute." Glory be unto thee, O Jesus; glory be unto thee, for thou hast done far more than Severity could ever have accomplished!

Next came one called *Stern Morality*, and he said, "Let us not kill them; let not the laws be like those of Draco, written in blood; but let us build a lazar-house, with high walls, and let us thrust them in there, and shut them out from all contact with their kind; in this way they shall live, but shall do no injury to their fellows. And the self-righteous Pharisee said, "Let my house be far away from the infected spot, lest the wind should blow from them to me. Let them be shut away from their fellows, as persons under a curse; let not others speak to them, or go near

them." The Pharisees were practising that method in Christ's day. They had tabooed the publicans and sinners, saying to them, "We will not touch you with so much as one of our fingers." They drew their garments around them, and gave the moral lepers plenty of passage-room in the streets; and if, by any chance, they did come into contact with them, or were obliged to have any dealings with them in the market-place, they were careful to wash before they ate bread, lest they should have been defiled. So society decided that a lazar-house should be built, and that the infected sinners should be put in there to rot and die by themselves. But Jesus said, "Not so, not so; if you mean to shut up all the infected, every one of you must also be shut up, for you are all suffering from the same disease in a greater or less degree. Why shut up these few when all are affected? Ye do not well; if ye build the walls of the lazar-house as high as heaven, the festering disease within will still find an outlet, and taint your sons and your daughters, notwithstanding all that ye do; and that place will be the hotbed of everything that is foul and noxious, and will tend to your own destruction despite all your efforts to be removed from it." You know how, even to this day, a certain class of sinner is considered by some good, reputable people as being unworthy even to be spoken of, or noticed, and some are foolish enough to try to forget that they are actually in existence. But our Divine Master went to the gate of the lazar-house, and knocked; and when it was opened, he said to those within, "Ye may come forth." Society outside objected; so he said, "Well then, if they may not come out, I will go in with them." And to those inside, he said, "Shut to the door, and keep out the over-righteous. I am come to eat bread, and to dwell with you, the infected and sinful ones." He put out both his hands, and touched them, and healed their diseases, and the blood leaped again in their veins, and their flesh came to them again like the flesh of a little child. Then he opened the gate again, and, strange to say, society outside was infected this time, and he said to those who had once been lepers in the lazar-house, "Go ye forth, and heal them;" and they went forth to carry healing to those who formerly thought themselves to be well, and thus he made the very curse itself to be a channel through which to spread the blessing. Blessed be thou, O Jesus! Thou hast done for sinners what the sternest laws and the strictest customs of society could never have effected.

But there have been others of a gentler spirit,—*Philanthropists*,—who have been sensible of the claims of humanity upon them. They have said, "Let us look at the case of these rebellious sinners in the most favourable light possible. Let us consider them as hopeful; let us use remedies that will be the means of healing them, but let us keep them in quarantine for many a day before we let them out; let us fumigate them, and put their clothes out until every trace of infection has gone from them; and if, after a long probation, they are proved to be really healed and cleansed, then let them go forth to freedom." But Jesus said, "Nay, not so; why would ye keep them thus shut up by themselves? If one

of them should become better, contact with his fellows would make him sick again. Will ye deny them your help and your sympathy, and shut them away by themselves? Your quarantine arrangements will breed further disease, and all your fumigations will be in vain; for, while you are seeking to cure, you will be generating the very disease you seek to destroy. The only effective remedy is for me to go in with them where they are." So he presented himself before them; they were covered with running sores, and they themselves were most obnoxious; yet he touched them;—nay, more, he embraced them. They were filthy, but he took them in his own hands, and washed them. They were ragged, but he himself took off their rags, clothed them in the spotless robe of his own righteousness, and gave them the kiss of his love upon their sin-stained cheeks. "Oh!" said they, "this is healing indeed. We were never healed before. People told us to get well, and said that, then, they would do something for us. They told us to cleanse ourselves, and said that, then, they would receive us; but thou, O blessed Saviour, didst take us just as we were,—all black, and defiled, and loathsome,—and thou hast made us clean." Glory be unto thee, O Jesus, for thou hast done ten thousand times more for poor lost souls than Philanthropy ever even suggested! Thy wisdom has availed where our prudence has defeated its own ends. Our sympathy has been marred by our vanity; our counsels have been rendered valueless by our conceit. We have repelled the confidence of sinners, while thou hast won their hearts; for thou hast sat down to eat with them, and thy disciples have shared the feast.

I have thus tried to paint three pictures; I do not know whether I have held the brush steadily enough, or have had sufficiently good colours to paint them true to life. I only want to show you that, while we are condemning the outcasts, Jesus Christ comes forth, and saves them; while we are trying to keep sinners away from us, he goes to them, and heals them; and while we are hoping the best concerning them, and thinking of the means by which they can be gradually renovated, he goes to them, and restores them. Christ takes into his arms some whom we would not touch with a pair of tongs. He receives into his very heart some whose names we would hardly venture to mention. He uplifts the beggar from the dunghill, he raises the despairing from the Slough of Despond, he takes the vilest of the vile, transforms them by his grace, and makes them meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.

I. After so long an introduction, I must compress the rest of my discourse as much as I can; and, first, I am going to ILLUSTRATE THE WAY IN WHICH CHRIST RECEIVES SINNERS.

There was a man,—a tax-gatherer,—who had an ill name everywhere; no one was more obnoxious than he was to the proud, moral, orthodox Pharisees. One day, he heard that Jesus of Nazareth, the great Prophet and Miracle-worker, was about to pass through his native place,—the accursed city of Jericho; and having a great curiosity, and nothing but a curiosity, to see the

mighty Saviour,—thinking, doubtless, no better of him than that he was a strange enthusiast,—he climbed up a tree, in the hope that, concealed amid its leaves, he might look down, unobserved, upon the famous Stranger. If a Pharisee had been walking that way, he would have avoided even the shadow of that tree, lest sin should be hidden by its shade, and he should thereby be defiled. But Christ, whose instincts of mercy always make him sharp-sighted where there is an object for his compassion, came right underneath that tree, and, looking up, cried aloud, "Zacchæus, make haste, and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house." No wonder that the Pharisees, and the people in general, murmured because Christ went to be a guest with a man who was "a sinner" in a very special sense. They were surprised that a man in such ill repute should have the honour of entertaining the Lord Jesus Christ. But our Lord entered the house of Zacchæus, and his truth entered the heart of Zacchæus; and there, on the spot, that "sinner" became a saint, practically proving the reality of his conversion by saying to Jesus, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold;" and Jesus said to him, "This day is salvation come to this house." O Saviour, thou hast done right well! Suppose the Lord had passed by Zacchæus without taking any notice of him, he would have remained as great a sinner as ever. Suppose he had upbraided him; possibly, then, the tax-gatherer would have replied in language not at all complimentary; but that kind word, that sweet look of pity, that gracious token of forgiveness broke the hard heart of the rich oppressor, and he gladly entertained his Saviour, and became his disciple. This is the way in which Jesus still deals with sinners. Have we a sinner in this house,—the house where Christ has, for many a day, wrought miracles of mercy? Sinner, he will not despise thee, and we are rejoiced to see thee in the place where Christ is preached. His eye is on thee now; where thou art, I cannot tell, but he can; and it may be that, this very hour, he will say to thee, "Sinner, make haste, and come down, for to-night I must abide at thy house." Who can tell? It may be with thee as it has been with many a score in this house;—thou mayest go home to forsake the drunkard's cup, to leave the Sabbath-breaker's haunts, to forsake the abodes of blasphemy, and to say, once for all, "Christ has called me; his I am, and him I desire to serve." This is how Jesus deals with sinners, even with sinners who are only moved by curiosity to see him, as Zacchæus was.

On another occasion, Christ was by the seaside, and he passed a certain toll-house where a tax-gatherer was "sitting at the receipt of custom." His name was Levi;—at least, that was his name when he was at home; but now that he had become one of the hated publicans, he had taken the name of Matthew, just as many a young man, when he runs away from home, and enlists in the army or navy, takes a name which does not belong to him. Little did he think that, when Jesus was passing by, he would take any notice of him; but he did, for he said to him, "Follow me." That

was all he said, but there was a volume of meaning in those two words; and the glance of his eye, and the majesty with which he pronounced his divine command, produced instant and most willing obedience, for "he arose, and followed him," and Matthew the publican became Matthew the apostle and Matthew the evangelist. Now, if Christ wanted an apostle, why did he not select one of the Pharisees? If he needed an evangelist, why did he not choose one of the scribes? The reason is, that a publican and a sinner was more adapted to his purpose. Perhaps the Lord is, at this moment, looking for a valiant preacher of the truth; and it may be that thou, my friend, away there among the crowd, art the man whom he has chosen for this high and noble enterprise. Christ found John Bunyan playing "tip-cat" on Elstow Green, and he found Richard Weaver down in the mines, blaspheming the name of God. Who knoweth whether he may not find thee for this high purpose, to bless thee, and to make thee a blessing? There may be some here, who will make hell's old pillars shake, though they are, to-day, the sworn friends of sin and Satan; but he, who has permitted them to go so far into sin, may issue his divine mandate, concerning each one of them,—

"Almighty grace, arrest that man;"—

and he shall be renewed in heart, changed in life, and made to be "a new creature in Christ Jesus." Certain it is that many of the most useful and honoured servants of the Lord Jesus Christ have been taken from that very class with whom Jesus and his disciples ate bread. There was a certain person needed, on one occasion, to be—if I may use the term,—lady in waiting to the King of kings. Queens might have been well content to part with their crowns in exchange for such an honour as that; yet "a woman in the city, which was a sinner," was chosen to render this lowly service to the Lord Jesus Christ, and she "stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment." Simon, the Pharisee, found fault with Christ for allowing her to do this, but Jesus said it was her great love which had moved her to do what the Pharisee had neglected to do for his guest; and to the woman, Jesus said, "Thy sins are forgiven . . . . Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace." Am I addressing any woman who might truly take the term "sinner" to herself? My sister, this is how Christ received this woman who was a sinner. He accepted the homage of her love,—love such as only she could render, love that could only come from a woman who had borne such a character as she had borne, and who therefore was filled with such intense gratitude to her Lord and Saviour. This is how Christ receiveth sinners; oh, that he might thus receive you just now!

Here is another case in which Christ received a sinner. I have reminded you how he visited the house of a sinner, how he chose a sinner to be one of his apostles, and how he was anointed by a woman who was a sinner; now he was about to die, and someone was needed to go with him from earth to heaven. When he

returned home, it was not meet that he should go back alone. The great Conqueror must not re-enter heaven without some token of his victories here below. O mighty Hero, thou mayest not pass the gates of thy paternal metropolis without taking some captive with thee! Who shall accompany the Saviour into his glory? Shall it be some martyr, who, in fiery chariot, shall mount to heaven with his Redeemer? Shall it be some devout disciple and deacon, like Stephen, who, amid a shower of stones, shall see heaven opened unto him, and enter it side by side with his Lord? Nay; but there is a thief dying on the cross hard by the suffering Son of God, for Jesus was numbered with the transgressors, and died in the company of sinners even as he had lived amongst them. The thief prayed, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom;" and Jesus answered, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise;" and, probably, the first soul to enter heaven after the return of the King was the soul of this poor penitent thief.

I will only mention one more case of Christ receiving a sinner. After he had gone back to heaven, he needed a man who should be his apostle to the Gentiles. Peter, the Jew, was far too bigoted, even when his nature was overruled by grace,—there was still so much of the Jewish exclusiveness in him,—that he was not fit to be the apostle of the Gentiles. The Master, therefore, resolved that, for once, he would call out of heaven with an audible voice, and that, as a pattern for all who should afterwards believe on him, he would have some one special soul. Who should that one be? You might send an officer through Greece and Rome, and he might find scores whom he would recommend for the post; but the least likely individual in the whole world was selected by Christ himself. There he is, "breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord," for he hates Christ, and his followers as well. When Stephen was stoned, he gloated over the dying martyr. He is constantly casting the Christians, both men and women, into prison; and he is now on his way to Damascus, being exceedingly mad against the saints, that he may persecute all whom he can find there who are followers of Christ. The sequel of the story is given in Paul's own words to Agrippa, "At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me. And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying, in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" The further sequel is given in Paul's words to the church at Ephesus, "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." This is my Master's way of dealing with sinners, even with him who called himself the chief. Proud professors, is this the way you deal with them? Professing Christians, whose hearts have grown callous, is this the way you act towards poor sinful souls? And O poor lost soul, is this the way that thou thoughtest Christ would deal with thee? He will do with thee as he did with them. He is as ready to save, to-day, as he was in the days gone by. He has as great a love

for sinners now as he had when he went through the towns and villages of Galilee, teaching and healing the people, or when he poured out his soul unto death, that he might redeem the lost by purchasing them with his blood.

II. I now turn to my second point, and ask,—How is it that Christ is so willing to come down to poor sinners, and save them?

Do not imagine that it is because he is insensible to their guilt. Sinner, Jesus Christ knows far better than you do what an evil and bitter thing sin is. It is as hateful and loathsome to him as anything can possibly be. It is not, therefore, because he is insensible to their guilt that he seeks the society of lost souls. Why, then, does he desire to be in their company?

It is *because he has such deep affection for sinners.* There is a little child crying upstairs; some people in the house wish that noise could be stopped, for they say they cannot endure it; but the mother says, "It is my child who is weeping up there," and she hurries up to comfort and soothe her babe. So, when we hear the sinner blaspheme, we are angry with him; but Christ weeps over him, and comes forth to save him. "He is my child," saith he,—

> "Joint heir with me he yet shall be
> In glory everlasting."

There is all the difference between what a wife will do for her sick husband and what a stranger might do for him. Imagine the husband suffering from some loathsome disease. The nurse says, "No; for no money in the world will I stay any longer. Besides, the disease is infectious, and I might take it to my dear ones at home." But if it were as infectious as the plague itself, and as noxious as the great pit into which the uncoffined dead were cast, that wife would still remain with her loved one,—if need be, to sicken, and suffer, and die,—for she says, "He is my husband." And here is a sinner, so full of filth that even the most sympathetic stand aside, and come not near him; but the Lord Jesus sees, in that abject sinner, a fit object for his pity and saving grace. "He is one with me," saith he, "by eternal covenant and union, and I will stay with him till I have healed him; I will watch by him till I have saved him from all his filthiness and all his sin."

Besides, poor sinner, there is another reason why the Lord Jesus Christ is so deeply interested in thee. *He sees in thee the purchase of his precious blood.* "I bought him," saith he, "with my heart's blood; do you think that I will lose him after that?" "But, Lord, he blasphemes thee." "Ay, but I have bought him with my blood." "But, Lord, he has made a covenant with death, and an agreement with hell." "Yes," saith Christ, "I know he hath; but I will disannul that covenant, and cancel that agreement, for I have bought him, and I will have him as my own." Jesus never forgets the price he paid for the redemption of even one soul. Methinks I hear him say, my brothers, "By my agony and bloody sweat, by my cross and passion, by my death and burial, I will have him as my own, for I cannot have suffered all these things in vain."

Moreover, *Christ views the sinner, not as he is in himself, but as*

he is in the purpose of redemption. "His whole head is sick," saith Christ, "but I can cure him; his whole heart is faint, but I can restore him, and I will do it. His feet have gone astray, his mouth is an open sepulchre, his eyes are windows of lust, his hands are stained with blood; but I will amend all that, and make him a new creature, meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light." Jesus looks, you see, not so much to what the sinner is in himself, as to what he can make him. He sees, in every sinner, the possibility of making a glorified saint, who shall dwell with him for ever and ever. If he chose you, poor sinner, before all worlds were made, and bought you with his blood, he sees you, not as you now are, but as you shall be when he has perfected you. Oh, what a wonder it will be when that poor drunkard, over there, shall sing in heaven as one of the spirits of just men made perfect, and when yonder harlot shall have a golden harp in her hand, and sound forth the praises of him who hath loved her, and washed her from her sins in his own blood! Yet he, who has said it, will do it; he, who is "mighty to save," will redeem by power those whom he has secured by purchase. And, penitent sinner, Jesus already hears thee hymning his praise; and he sees thee, as thou wilt be, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, washed in his blood, renewed by his Spirit, brought safely home, and glorified with him for ever. No wonder, then, that Christ is willing to come to poor sinners, and to dwell with them. He can see what you and I cannot see,—what they shall be when he has fulfilled his purposes of mercy and grace concerning them.

Sinner, thou art so ashamed of thy sin that thou darest not approach a minister, but thou canst approach Christ. There is no pride in him, and no cautious reserve, such as we might rightly exercise in dealing with thee. Though thou canst not tell even thine own father all about thyself, thou canst tell it all to Jesus. Thou canst not tell all the story of thy sin and thy repentance to the wife of thy bosom, but thou canst tell it to Jesus. There is no music that he loves so much as the voice of a sinner confessing his sin; there are no pearls that he prizes so highly as those pearly tears which repentance forms in the eye of the soul that trembleth at his Word. Do not imagine that he is hard to please, for he loves sinners; do not fancy that it is difficult to obtain access to him. Like the father in the parable, he can see a sinner when he is a great way off, and he will run to meet you, and give you a hearty reception, and a loving welcome. You will be happy in being saved, but he will be more happy in saving you. You will rejoice in being pardoned, but he will rejoice more in pardoning you. I cannot put this blessed truth about Christ's compassion for sinners in such words as I fain would do if I could. If you do not admit that you are a sinner, I have no gospel to preach to you; but if you stand self-condemned, I have a message of mercy to deliver to you. To the self-convicted, to the law-condemned, the prisoners that plead guilty, those who are ready to confess that they are undeserving, ill-deserving, hell-deserving sinners, I have to say that Christ is an approachable Saviour. Nay, more than that,

he is waiting to be gracious; he stands, with arms outstretched, longing to clasp poor sinners to his heart. Why do you wait?

III. Now I close my discourse by endeavouring to teach you THE PRACTICAL LESSON WHICH OUGHT TO FOLLOW from the fact that Christ receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.

Let me just utter a word of warning here. When we speak of Christ receiving sinners, everybody says, "Well, I am a sinner." It is a curious proof that people do not know what a sinner is, or they would not be so ready to admit that they are in that class. If I were to say to almost any man I met, "You are a criminal," in almost every case, he would reply, "No, sir, I am not." But what is the difference between being a criminal and being a sinner, except that the sinner is the worse of the two? A criminal is a person who offends against the laws of men; "a sinner" is a theological term, signifying one who offends against the laws of God. People say, "To be criminals,—oh, that is horrible! But to be sinners,—well, we are all sinners;" and they do not appear to think anything of that terrible truth. Ah! but, unless the grace of God shall change you, the day will come when you will think it would have been better to have been a frog, a toad, a viper, or any other creature, rather than to have been a sinner; for, next to the word "devil", there is no word which has so much that is dreadful in it as that word "sinner." "A sinner" means one who cares nothing for God, one who breaks God's laws, despises God's mercy, and who will, if he continues as he is, have to endure God's wrath as a punishment for his sin.

Yet these are the persons whom Jesus Christ is willing to receive. You cannot, therefore, any of you say, if you perish, that you perish because he would not receive you. "Oh, but!" say you, "he would never receive such a sinner as I am." How do you know that? Have you ever tried him? There is not, even in hell itself, a sinner, who will ever dare to say that he came to Jesus, yet Jesus refused to receive him. There is not a lost soul, in the pit, who can look up to God, and truthfully say to him, "Great God, I asked for mercy through the precious blood of Jesus, but thou saidst, 'I will not grant it to thee.'" No, that can never be; neither on earth, nor in hell, shall there ever be one soul that trusted in Christ, and then perished. You say that Christ will not save you, so I ask again,—Did you ever try him? Did you ever give him a fair trial? Did you ever, on your knees, conscious of your lost condition, say to him, "Jesus, save me, or I die"? You are spiritually blind; did you ever say to him, "Thou Son of David, have mercy on me"? Did you cry to him, again and again, and did he turn his back upon you, and leave you still in darkness? Leper, you are loathsome in his sight by reason of your sin; but did you ever say to him, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean"? No, you know you never did that, though you have often resolved that you would do so. Under an earnest sermon, you have said, "I will seek the Lord;" but when you got outside the house of prayer, some idle companion met you, and you soon forgot all about your good resolution.

But let me say to thee now,—Despite all the years in which thou hast heard the gospel in vain, if the Holy Spirit shall move thee even now to confess thy sin to Jesus, and to say to him, "Thou Son of David, have mercy on me; I put my soul's affairs into thy hands from this moment;"—sinner, he will save thee. Or, if he will not, then I will perish with thee, and the whole Church of God will also perish with thee; for this is all our hope, that Jesus died to save the lost; and if one soul, believingly gazing upon his wounds, can perish, then all must perish, and the pit must engulf the whole blood-bought family of God. But that can never be.

There is an old tradition, which I will repeat as a rebuke to the self-righteous, and a comfort to the sinner. Dean Trench, quoting from a Persian moralist, tells one of his old fables about Jesus. Of course, it is only a fable; but it contains the very spirit of the truth about which I have been preaching. When Christ, according to this fable, was travelling through a certain region, he stayed at the cave of a hermit. It so happened that there was, living in the neighbouring town, a young man, whose vices were so great that, according to common report, the devil himself did not dare to associate with him lest he should become worse than he was before. This young man, hearing that the Saviour, who could pardon sin, was in the hermit's cave, went to him. Falling down on his knees, he made confession of his guilt, and acknowledged that he was utterly unworthy of mercy, but entreated Christ, in the love of his gracious heart, to forgive him for the past, and make him a new man for the future. The monk, who lived in the cave, said to the young man, "Get you gone; you are not worthy to be in such a holy spot as this;" and, turning to the Saviour, he said, "Lord, in the other world, appoint me a place as far away as possible from this wretch." The Saviour answered, "Thy prayer is heard; thou art self-righteous, so I appoint thee thy place in hell; this man is penitent, and seeks mercy at my hands; I appoint him his place in heaven. Thus both of you shall have your heart's desire." There is the very essence of the doctrine of justification by faith in that old fable. Go you, who trust in your own good works, and perish. Come, you who confess your evil deeds, hate them, flee from them, and trust in Jesus, and you are saved, while they who go about to establish their own righteousness shall perish everlastingly. Oh, that my Master would draw some of you to him at this moment! What say you? Will you go with this Man, who receiveth sinners? He bids you come to him; will you come? You cannot plead that you are too vile, for he takes the very off-scourings of men,—the devil's outcasts, he will not cast out if they will but come unto him. However despairing of yourself you may be, you must not say of him, "He will reject me." Trust him to receive you, and trust him now. O Spirit of the living God, prove the divinity of Christ's gospel, this very hour, by turning lions into lambs, and ravens into doves, and let the chief of sinners prove thy power to save! Amen.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

UNBELIEVERS UPBRAIDED.

A Sermon

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DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

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"He . . . . upbraided them with their unbelief."—Mark xvi. 14.

I SHALL not dwell so much upon this particular instance of the disciples' unbelief as upon the fact that the Lord Jesus upbraided them because of it. This action of his shows us the way in which unbelief is to be treated by us. As our loving Saviour felt it to be right rather to upbraid than to console, he taught us that, at least on some occasions, unbelief should be treated with severity rather than with condolence.

Beloved friends, let us never look upon our own unbelief as an excusable infirmity, but let us always regard it as a sin, and as a great sin, too. Whatever excuse you may at any time make for others,—and I pray you to make excuses for them whenever you can rightly do so,—never make any for yourself. In that case, be swift to condemn. I am not at all afraid that, as a general rule, we shall err on the side of harshness to ourselves. No; we are far too ready to palliate our own wrong-doing, to cover up our own faults, and to belittle our own offences. I very specially urge every believer in Jesus to deal most sternly with himself in this matter of unbelief. If he turns the back of the judicial knife towards others, let him always turn the keen edge of it towards himself. In that direction, use your sharpest eye and your most severely critical judgment. If you see any fault in yourself, you may depend upon it that the fault is far greater than it appears to be; therefore, deal more sternly with it. It is a very easy thing for us to get into a desponding state of heart, and to mistrust the promises and faithfulness of God; and yet, all the while, to look upon ourselves as the subjects of a disease which we cannot help, and even to claim pity at the hands of our fellow-men, and to think that they should condole with us, and try to cheer us. Perhaps they should; but, at any rate, we must not think that they should. It will be far wiser for each one of us to feel,

"This unbelief of mine is a great wrong in the sight of God. He has never given me any occasion for it, and I am doing him a cruel injustice by thus doubting him. I must not idly sit down, and say, 'This has come upon me like a fever, or a paralysis, which I cannot help;' but I must rather say, 'This is a great sin, in which I must no longer indulge; but I must confess my unbelief, with shame and self-abasement, to think that there should be in me this evil heart of unbelief.'"

Notwithstanding what I said, just now, concerning our dealings with others, I must give very much the same advice with regard to them as to ourselves, though in a somewhat mitigated form. When we see any of our friends falling into sin and unbelief, we must seek to deal wisely with them,—always kindly,—never harshly. Let us reserve all our severity for ourselves, as I have already urged upon you. Still, I am sure that it is quite possible for us to be doing our fellow-Christians serious harm by excusing their unbelief, and by pitying them for it, instead of pointing out to them, tenderly, yet faithfully, the great sin they are committing by this doubting.

Have you never seen a "coddled" lad? I have seen one, who ought to be in the open air at play, shut in a close room because his parents were fearful that he was delicate, and unable to do as other lads do. He ought to have been taking part in various healthy exercises that would have developed and strengthened every muscle in his body; but, instead of that, he was sitting down, tied to his mother's apron strings, and so was being made weaker than he was before. He was kept in an atmosphere which was not fit for him to breathe because his foolish parents were afraid the fresh air might be too trying for him; and long before he was ill, he was dosed and physicked until he really became ill. Many a child has been murdered by being thus coddled; or, if he has lived to grow up to manhood, he has been a poor, feeble, effeminate creature, because the abundant love, which has been lavished upon him, has been linked with equally abundant folly. You can easily treat Christians, and especially young converts, in the same senseless fashion. If they are unbelieving, you can keep back from them the stern truth about the sinfulness of such a state of heart and mind, because you fear that they will be discouraged if you deal faithfully with them. That is quite as wrong as saying to the unconverted, over and over again, "Only believe," without ever mentioning the need of repentance and regeneration. There is a way of misapplying even the promises of God to unbelieving hearts, and of giving the consolations of the gospel to those who are not in a condition to receive them, as one might give sweetmeats to sick children, and so do them harm. People, who are thus unwisely treated, are apt to remain in the same sad state until their unbelief becomes chronic, and their unhappiness becomes a lifelong burden to them. Sometimes, when a man is in great pain, it is wise to give him something that will afford him even temporary relief; but the better course is, if possible, to strike at the root of his disease, and eradicate it once for all. That should be our method of dealing with the unbelief of our brothers and sisters in Christ. We must make it clear to them that unbelief is no trifle, and that it

is a thing for which its owner is not to be pitied, but to be blamed, and to be severely blamed, for it is a most grievous fault and sin. Our Saviour dealt thus with the eleven when he upbraided them because of their unbelief. He did not excuse them, or comfort them, but he upbraided them. Upbraiding does not seem to be in harmony with the usual character of Jesus, does it? Yet, you may depend upon it that it was the right thing for him to do, and the kind thing, too; otherwise, he would not have done it.

Jesus upbraided these disciples of his because of their unbelief upon a very special point on which they ought to have been the first to believe. Many persons had seen their Lord after he had risen from the dead; and the eleven apostles, who ought, by reason of their greater spiritual advantages, and their more intimate companionship with Christ, to have been the readiest to believe the good tidings, were not so; and, therefore, Christ "upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he had risen." Yet these eye-witnesses—Peter and John, Cleopas and his companion, and Mary Magdalene, Joanna, the other Mary, and the rest of the holy women,—who had come to the eleven, were their own brethren and sisters in the faith; so Christ might well say to them,—and I daresay he did,—"Why did you doubt their testimony? You did them an injustice by acting in such a manner. They are honest and truthful, and they have told you the truth. You have not been accustomed to doubt their word; so, as you have believed their witness concerning other matters, why did you not believe them in this instance? Moreover," our Lord might well say, "there were many of them; it was not merely one, who might have been mistaken; but a considerable number saw me, and I spake with them; and they came and told you that it was even so, yet you did not believe them. The number of the witnesses, and their well-known character, are sure signs that you must have been in a wrong state of heart and mind, not to be able to receive such clear evidence as theirs; and, therefore, you are blameworthy for your unbelief."

In the case of these apostles, unbelief was peculiarly sinful, for they had the promise of their Lord to back up the testimony of his disciples. He had often told them that he would rise again from the dead, and had even foretold the very day of his resurrection, so that the unbelief of the apostles was altogether inexcusable. Yet this very fact, which was a cause of stumbling to the apostles, appears to me to give point and power to the appeal which I make to myself, and to you, against our unbelief. We all believe that Jesus Christ rose from the dead; we have no difficulty in accepting that great fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith; all of us, who are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, fully endorse Paul's words to the saints in Rome, and say that our Lord "was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." Well, then, brethren and sisters in Christ, if we believe that Jesus rose from the dead, the ground is completely cut from under the feet of unbelief, for his promise is, "Because I live, ye shall live also." If he lives, then the gospel is true, and the promises of the gospel are sure to all who

believe in him. If he lives, then he lives to intercede for us; and, through his intercession, every covenant blessing is certain to come to us. Therefore, if we harbour unbelief in our hearts, we are doubly guilty; and if the Saviour were here in bodily presence, though his face would still beam with infinite love to us, I am quite sure that he would, even in sterner tones than he used towards those eleven apostles, upbraid us because of our unbelief. If Thomas will not believe that Christ is risen until he has put his finger into the print of the nails in his hands, and thrust his hand into his Saviour's wounded side, that is bad enough; but it is worse if you, who do believe that he is risen, and who do not doubt any one of the doctrines that he has taught you, still have unbelief mingled with the faith which you do possess. Whether that supposed faith is all true, or not, is more than I can say; but, with so much faith as you profess to have, how can you still continue to doubt?

I want, in this discourse, to upbraid myself, and you also, for any unbelief that we may have harboured, by noticing, first, *the evil of unbelief in itself*; and, then, *the evils that surely flow out of unbelief*.

I. First, then, I have to say to any of God's children who have given way to unbelief in any degree,—YOUR UNBELIEF IS AN EVIL THING IN ITSELF.

This truth will come very closely home to you if you will just *think how you would feel if others disbelieved you*. If anyone were to question your veracity, you would be very vexed; and if you made a promise to any man, and he expressed a doubt as to the fulfilment of it, you would feel hurt; but if those, with whom you are most closely connected, were to disbelieve you, you would feel still more grieved, for you expect absolute confidence from them. If mutual trust were taken away from any family, how unhappy the members of that family would be;—the children suspecting the sincerity of their parents' love,—the wife doubting the reality of her husband's affection,—the husband dubious of his wife's faithfulness! Try to conceive, if you can, what it would be if those, who now call you friend, or child, or husband, or wife, or brother, or sister, should no longer accept what you say as being true. Suppose, also, that you were perfectly conscious that you had never broken your word to them,—that you had faithfully kept every promise that you had made to them, and had been in all things honest, and true, and sincere, would you not feel their doubts and suspicions most acutely? I am sure you would; they would touch the very apple of your eye, and cut you to the quick; you could not endure such treatment from them. Then, how can you mete out to the Lord Jesus Christ such treatment as would be so painful to yourself? And, further, how can you expect your child to trust you when you doubt your Saviour? How can you look even to your wife for confidence in you when, if there be some little trouble, or things go somewhat awkwardly, you straightway begin to mistrust your God and Saviour?

Remember, too, that *the sin of your unbelief may be measured by the excellence of the Person whom you mistrust*. I said, just now, that, if you were conscious of your absolute sincerity, you would be the more deeply wounded by the suspicion of those who doubted you.

What think you then, of the sin of doubting Christ, who cannot lie, who is "the Truth" itself? I know, beloved, that you have a very high opinion of your Lord and Saviour; do you not worship him as Divine? Do you not also feel his truly human sympathy? You know that there is no clause in his everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure, which he has not already fulfilled, or which he will not fulfil at the appointed time. His incarnation, his life here below, his shameful sufferings, his vicarious death;—all these he promised to undergo, and all these he performed in due season, and he will go right through, to the end, with the great work of your eternal salvation. By the mouth of his servant Jeremiah, the Lord asked, long ago, "Have I been a wilderness unto Israel? a land of darkness?" And the Lord Jesus might well say to his professed followers, "Have I been as the barren fig tree was to me when I found on it nothing but leaves?" As he points to the long list of his favours to us, he may well ask, "For which of them do you thus misjudge and mistrust me?" And when he spreads out the whole roll of his life and work before you, he may well enquire, "Upon which part of my life or work do you base your suspicions? What is there in my nature, as Divine and human,—what is there in my character,—what is there in my life below, or in my life above,—that should lead you to question my faithfulness to you, my power to help you, my readiness to sympathize with you, my willingness to bless you?" Why, you are doubting him whom the angels adore and worship! You have felt, sometimes, as if you would like to wash his feet with your tears. How, then, can you ever insult him with your doubts? You have even said that you could die for him; and it has been your great ambition to live for him; yet you cannot trust him! If you have run with the footmen in the matter of these minor trials of your faith, and they have wearied you, what would you do if you had to contend with horsemen, as many others have had to do in the day of martyrdom? And if, in the favourable circumstances in which you have been placed, you have doubted your Saviour, what are you likely to do when you are in the swellings of Jordan? Ah, my brethren, when you think of unbelief as aiming her darts at Jesus Christ, the Well-beloved of our soul, surely you will say that it is a shameful sin, and a disgraceful crime against infinite love!

Then, *remember, beloved in the Lord, the relationship in which Jesus Christ stands to you.* You know that, the more closely we are allied to a person, the more painful any suspicion on the part of that person becomes. I have repeatedly used, in this connection, the figure of a child's trust in a parent, a husband's trust in his wife, and the wife's trust in her husband; and you have readily accepted the comparisons because you have felt that the nearness of the relationship would involve a corresponding degree of trust. How near—how very near—we are in kinship to Christ! Are we not married to him? Has he not espoused us unto himself for ever? There is a conjugal union between Christ and his Church of which the marriage bond on earth is but a feeble type. Then, can you, who have been renewed in heart by the Holy Spirit, and washed in the blood of the

Lamb, doubt him whom your soul loveth? Can you distrust him to whom you are so closely allied? Oh, shame, shame, shame, that want of confidence should come in to mar such a wondrous union as that!

But we are even more closely knit to Christ than the marriage union implies, for "we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." I cannot explain that secret, mystical union of which the Scripture speaks; but it is a true union, whatever mystery there may be about it. Then, shall there be such disunion amongst the members of the body that the eye shall begin to doubt the heart, and the hand to mistrust the foot? It would be pitiful if such a state of things could prevail in our bodies; then, what must it be if such a state of things prevails among the members of the mystical body of Christ? Beloved, may God render this unbelief impossible by sending such life floods of grace through all the members of Christ's body that never more shall a single thought of mistrust of our glorious covenant Head enter our minds even for a single instant!

Consider next, I pray you, dear friends, *how many times some of us have doubted our Lord.* The sin of unbelief becomes all the greater because it is so frequently committed. God be thanked that it is not so with all Christians: for there are some who walk in faith, and dwell in faith. I suppose that, as birds fly over everybody's head, so doubts fly around all good men's minds; but our old proverb says, "You need not let birds build in your hair," although there are some people, who let doubts come and lodge in their minds, and even dwell in their hearts. We know some persons of this kind, who seem to be very easily led into despondency, and doubt, and mistrust of Christ. Well now, if a man has done this only once, I think he might well say to himself, "I did once question everlasting truth. I did once stain the spotless robe of infinite veracity with a dark blot of suspicion;" and I think that he might find it difficult to forgive himself for having done a thing so vile even once. But when it comes to many times, and when it comes to long periods of doubt and mistrust, it is still worse. I want to press this point home upon all whom it concerns, and I want your consciences to be wide awake, so that, as you recall the many times in which you have thus sinned against your Heavenly Father, and against his blessed Spirit, and against his Divine Son, you may recollect that each distinct act of unbelief is a sin,—each act of mistrust is another wounding of the Lord. God grant that we may truly repent as we think of the many times in which we have been thus guilty!

Then there is this further point,—*some of these actions have been repetitions of former ones.* For instance, a man is in trouble, and he has doubts concerning the providence of God; but he is delivered, God is gracious to him, and helps him out of his difficulty. Well, now, if he falls into a similar trouble, and if he is again guilty of harbouring doubt, this is far worse. If a man should doubt your word the first time you speak to him, you might say, "Well, he does not know me." The second time, you might say, "When he has proved me more, he will trust me." But what shall I say of those, whose hair has a sprinkling of grey in it, and whose Christian experience extends to a score of years, or more,—perhaps, two score,—

possibly, three score? Oh, if you doubt the Lord now, it will be a crying shame! It will not be surprising if some of us act thus, for so did Israel for forty years in the wilderness; but that does not mitigate the evil in our case. It is a desperately evil thing that God should be mistrusted over and over again, and that he should have to say, "How long will it be ere ye believe me?"

I scarcely like to linger on such a sad theme; yet it does our hearts good to be thus upbraided; so, recollect that, *oftentimes our unbelief has come in the teeth of our own assurance to the contrary.* Do you not sometimes catch yourself saying, after a very great mercy, "Well, I never can doubt the Lord again"? When you have had an answer to prayer of a very memorable kind, you have said, "Oh, I must believe in the power of prayer now! For me ever to think that the Lord will deny me, must be impossible." Yes, in that respect also, we are just like the Israelites, who promised to keep the covenant, yet speedily broke it.

There is also this aggravation of your sin; *although you do not trust the Lord as you should, you do trust your fellow-creatures.* You can believe that lie of the old serpent,—

> "The Lord hath forsaken thee quite;
> Thy God will be gracious no more;"—

yet you cannot so readily believe the oath and promise of God. If an earthly friend were to say to you, "I will help you," how readily you would jump at his offer! If there be an arm of flesh near, how cheerfully you lean upon it; and, though, perhaps, there be nothing for you to stay yourself upon but a broken reed, you think it is a strong staff, and throw all your weight upon it. It is quite true that ungodly men, who have no faith, generally have any amount of credulity. They cannot believe the truth, but they can believe lies to any extent. So is it, alas! with God's own people when they get off the track of faith. They seem to become credulous concerning the things seen, which are temporal, in proportion as they become dubious of the things unseen, which are eternal. Is not this a sin of the greatest blackness? Thou canst not trust thy husband, but thou canst trust a flatterer who deceives thee! Thou canst not trust thy God, but thou makest idol gods unto thyself, and trustest to them. Thou canst not stay thyself on Jehovah, but thou canst stay thyself on Egypt. Thou canst stay thyself on the promise of man who is but as a moth which is soon crushed; but as for him who made the heavens and the earth, and all things that are, thou canst not rely upon him. I feel as if I could sit down and cover my face for shame, when I think of those occasions wherein I have been guilty of this sin. Perhaps the best thing we could all do would be to go home, and fall on our knees, and ask our blessed Saviour to wash away all this unbelief, and not to believe us when we talk about doubting, but only to believe that, as he knows all things, he knows that, after all, we do trust him.

II. Now, with great brevity, I have to speak upon the second point, which is, THE MANY EVILS WHICH COME OUT OF UNBELIEF TO THOSE OF US WHO LOVE THE LORD.

Brethren and sisters, it is enough of evil—if there were no more,—that *unbelief is so cruel to Christ, and grieves his Holy Spirit so much.* I should but repeat myself if I reminded you how mistrust grieves you; and, speaking after the manner of men, in the same fashion it grieves the Holy Spirit. He dwells in you; shall he dwell in you to be grieved by you? He assuages your grief; will you cause him grief? Your vexations vanish because he is the Comforter; will you vex the Comforter? And what can vex him more than suspecting the ever-faithful heart of Christ? That is evil enough,—to wound Christ and the Holy Spirit.

Next, remember,—though this is a more selfish argument,—*how much unrest and misery unbelief has caused to yourself.* You have never had half as many trials from God as you have manufactured for yourself. Death, which you so much dread, is nothing compared with the thousand deaths that you have died through the fear of death. You make a whip for yourself, and you mix bitter cups for yourself, by your unbelief. There is quite enough trial for you to bear, and God will help you to bear it; but you put away the helping hand when you are unbelieving, and then you increase your own burden. Oh, you can sing, even by the rivers of Babylon, if you have but faith! You may lie on your sick bed, and feel great pain; yet your spirit shall not smart, but shall dance away your pangs, if your heart be but looking in simple confidence to Christ; and you shall die, as the negro said his master died,—"full of life,"—if you have true faith in Jesus. But if faith shall fail you, oh, then you are distressed when there is no cause for distress, and full of fear where no fear is!

And, then, *how much you lose, in other things, besides happiness!* A thousand promises are missed because there is not the faith to claim them. There are the caskets, and you have the keys; yet you do not put the keys into the locks to open them. There are Joseph's granaries, and you are hungry; but you do not go unto Joseph, and show your confidence in him by asking for what you need. Ye are not straitened in God, but in yourselves. If you believe not, you shall not be established, neither shall your prayers prevail, nor shall you grow in grace. If you believe not, your experience shall not be of that high and lofty kind that otherwise it might have been. We live down here in the marsh and the mist, when, had we faith, we might live in the everlasting sunshine. We are down below in the dungeons, fretting under imaginary chains, when the key of promise is in our bosom, which will open every door in Doubting Castle. If we will but use it, we may get away to the tops of the mountains, and see the New Jerusalem, and the land which is very far off.

Further, *unbelief weakens us for all practical purposes.* What can the man who is unbelieving do? O brothers and sisters in Christ, it is a terrible thing to think how much work there is that falls flat because it is not done in faith. You saw the trees when they were covered with bloom; there seemed to be a promise of much fruit; but there were chilling winds, and sharp frosts, and so, perhaps, only one in a hundred of the blossoms ever turned to fruit. The tree of the Church seems, at times, covered with beauteous

blossoms; what can be more lovely to the sight? But the blossoms do not knit,—faith is the bee that carries the pollen, it is faith that fructifies the whole, and makes it truly fruitful unto God. What might my sermons not have done had I believed my Master more? You, Sunday-school teacher, may say, "Had I taught in greater faith, I might have won my scholars." Or you may say, "Had I gone to my visitings of the poor and the sick in the strength of the Lord, who knows what I might have done for him?" Faith is the Nazarite lock of Samson; if it be shorn away, Samson is weak as other men. Then, as to suffering, wonderful is the power of faith there. If you are trusting your Heavenly Father, believing that all is right that seems most wrong, that everything that happens is ordered or permitted by him, and that his grace will sweeten every bitter cup, you can suffer patiently; and, as your tribulations abound, so will your consolations abound in Christ Jesus. Like the ark of Noah, as the waters deepen, you will rise upon them, and get nearer to heaven in proportion as the great floods increase.

Unbelief, in any Christian, no doubt *has a very injurious effect upon other Christians.* There are some, who are like sickly sheep, which—

> **"Infect the flock,**
> **And poison all the rest."**

Especially is it so, dear brethren, if you happen to be in office in the church, or to be doing any prominent work for Christ. If the commander-in-chief trembles, the army is already conquered; if the captain begins to fear, fear will take possession of every soldier's heart in his company. Was it not grand of Paul, in the shipwreck, when all others were dismayed, and thought they should go to the bottom, but he said, "Have no fear, sirs," and he bade them eat, as he ate,—calmly giving thanks to God before them all? Why, Paul saved them all by his calm confidence in God. If we have but faith, we shall strengthen our brethren; and if we have it not, we shall weaken them. I am sure, too, that *the influence of unbelief in Christians, upon the unconverted, is very serious indeed.* If we do not play the man in times of trial,—if we do not show them what faith in God can do,—they will think that there is nothing in it. And suppose, brethren, you should make anyone think there is nothing in religion, how sad that would be! When the devil wants a friend, surely he could not find one more able to do him service than a child of God who is full of mistrust. The children say, "Our father only trusts God for bread when there is plenty in the cupboard." And the servants say, "The master is only happy in the Lord when he is in good health." And those who know our business affairs say, "Oh, yes! So-and-so is a great believer; but, then, he has a big balance at his banker's; you should see him when trade is bad; you should see him when there are bad debts; and you will find that he is not a bit more a believer in Jesus Christ than any of the rest of us. He is a fair-weather Christian; he is like the flowers that open when the sun shines; but take away the summer prosperity, and you will see but little of his religion." Let it not be so with any of us, but may God deliver us from this tremendous evil of unbelief!

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

HEBREWS XI. 1—13; AND 32—40.

Verses 1, 2. *Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good report.*

So it was written, in the olden time, that believers "obtained a good report;" and this second verse shows that they obtained it by their faith. The best part of the report about them is, that they believed their God, and believed all that was revealed to them by his Word and his Spirit.

3. *Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.*

The facts about creation must be the subject of faith. It is true that they can be substantiated, by the argument from design, and in other ways; still, for a wise purpose as I believe, God has not made even that matter of the creation of the universe perfectly clear to human reason, so there is room for the exercise of faith. Men like to have everything laid down according to the rules of mathematical precision, but God desires them to exercise faith; and, therefore, he has not acted according to their wishes.

4. *By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.*

The first of the long line of martyrs triumphed by faith; and if you are to be strong to bear witness for God, you must be made strong by the same power which wrought so effectually in Abel. If, like his, your life is to be a speaking life,—a life which shall speak even out of the grave,—its voice must be the voice of faith.

5. *By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.*

It is faith that muzzles the mouth of death, and takes away the power of the sepulchre. If any man, who had not been a believer, had been translated as Enoch was, we should have been able to point to a great feat accomplished apart from faith. It has never been so; for this, which was one of the greatest things that was ever done,—to leap from this life into another, and to overleap the grave altogether,—was only achieved "by faith."

6, 7. *But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet,*

These are the things with which faith always deals;—not with the things that are seen or are apprehensible by the senses or the feelings.

7. *Moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.*

So you see that faith has a condemning power towards an ungodly world. You do not need to be constantly telling worldlings that they are doing wrong; let them see clearly the evidence of your faith, for that will bear the strongest conceivable witness against their unbelief and sin, even as Noah, by his faith, "condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith."

8. *By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.*

That is, surely, the very masterpiece of faith. God bade Abraham go

forth from his native land; he believed that God knew where he was to go, though he did not himself know; so he left the direction of his wanderings entirely in the Lord's hands, and obeyed, and "went out, not knowing whither he went." We are not to ask for full knowledge before we will be obedient to the will of the Lord; but we are to obey God in the dark, even as Abraham did.

9. *By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise:*

It is one of the great evidences of true faith for her to keep on, to continue, to abide, without any visible signs or tokens of what she knows is hers. The life of faith is wonderful, but so also is the walk of faith. Her walk has much about it that is mysterious; she knows that the land she treads on belongs to her; and yet, in another sense, she cannot claim a solitary foot of it. She knows that she is at home, even as Abraham was in his own land; yet like him, she knows herself to be a sojourner in a strange land, and is quite content to be so.

10. *For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.*

What a depth of meaning there is in those five words, "a city which hath foundations,"—as if all other cities had none! They come, and they go, as if they were molehills raised on the surface of the earth, or little mounds of sand made by the children's wooden spades upon the seashore, which the next tide will wash away. What vast numbers of cities have been destroyed already! We are constantly picking up the relics of them; but there is, blessed be the name of the Lord, "a city which hath foundations," a city founded on eternal power, and we are on our way to that city, I hope.

11, 12. *Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised. Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable.*

Perhaps the reference is to Abraham, who was as good as dead, being so old; or to Isaac, who was as good as dead, for he was laid upon the altar, and was practically "offered up" as a sacrifice unto the Lord. There were many deaths to work against the life of faith; yet life triumphed over death after all.

13. *These all died in faith,*

That is the epitaph which God has carved over the resting-place of his faithful ones: "These all died in faith." Will this be the record concerning all of us, "These all died in faith"?

13. *Not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.*

The chapter is a very long one so I must condense it, as the apostle himself did when he came to the 32nd verse; there was so much to be said that he added,—

32. *And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets:*

There are some names, in this chapter, which we should hardly have expected to see there, the characters mentioned having been so disfigured by serious faults, and flaws, and failings; but the distinguishing feature of faith was there in every instance, and especially in the case of Samson.

Perhaps there was no more childlike faith, in any man, than there was in him; who but a man full of faith would have hurled himself upon a thousand men with no weapon in his hand but the jawbone of an ass? There was a wondrous confidence in God in that weak, strong man, which, though it does not excuse his faults, yet nevertheless puts him in the ranks of the believers. Happy is the man or woman who believeth in God. There were multitudes of others, beside those whom the apostle named,—

33. *Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness,*

Is that as great an exploit as subduing kingdoms? Yes, that it is; to have, by faith, preserved a holy character, in such a world of temptation as this, is a far grander achievement than to have conquered any number of kingdoms by force of arms.

33, 34. *Obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong,*

Do you notice how, every now and then, there is the mention of a feat which seems altogether beyond you; but then there follows one, in which you can be a partaker with these heroes and heroines of faith? It may be that you have never "quenched the violence of fire;" yet, often enough, it has been true of you that, by faith, "out of weakness" you have been "made strong." Others—

34, 35. *Waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance: that they might obtain a better resurrection:*

What wondrous faith it was which sustained the saints under the awful tortures to which they were subjected! The story harrows one's heart even to read it; what must it have been actually to endure?

36—39. *And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise:*

These worthies lived before Christ came; but, since then, equally noble exploits have been performed by the heroes and heroines of faith. The Christian martyrs have shown the extremity of human endurance when they have been sustained by faith; and the bead-roll of Christian heroes, since their Lord ascended to heaven, is longer and even brighter than that of the faithful ones who came before them in the earlier dispensation.

40. *God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.*

The new dispensation is necessary to complete the old; the New Testament is the complement of the Old Testament, and New Testament saints join hands with Old Testament elders. Let us all be worthy of our high pedigree; and may God grant that, if the saints of these latter days are to perfect the history of the Church of Christ, the end may not be less heroic than the beginning was! A true poem should gather force as it grows, and its waves of thought should roll in with greater power as it nears its climax; so should the mighty poem of faith's glorious history increase in depth and power, as it gets nearer to its grand consummation, that God may be glorified, yet more and more, through all his believing children. So may it be! Amen.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

A SABBATH MIRACLE.

A Sermon

PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JULY 7TH, 1904,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, June 11th, 1876.

"And he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. And, behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself. And when Jesus saw her, he called her to him, and said unto her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity. And he laid his hands on her: and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God."—Luke xiii. 10—13.

WHAT blessed days Sabbath days are! I mean not only the Jewish Sabbath on the seventh day of the week, but the Christian Sabbath on the first day of the week. I remember a friend in Newcastle telling me that, when he was looking at a house, in that city, which was to be let, he was taken to the top of it, and the agent said to him, "You see that there is a fine view from here. You can see a long way to-day; but, on Sundays, you can see Durham Cathedral." My friend asked, "Why on Sundays?" and the reply was, "You cannot see it all the rest of the week because of the smoke; but, on Sundays, it is usually clear enough to get a glimpse of it." What views some of us have had of heaven, and what views of Jesus Christ have been accorded to us, on Sabbath days! We might have seen him on other days if there had not been so much smoke from business, and care, and sin; but the blessed breath from heaven has blown it all away on the Lord's day, and we have been able to look even into that which is within the veil.

Our Lord Jesus Christ has performed wonders of grace on all the days of the week. I should not be surprised to hear that there are Christians here who were converted on a Monday, or a Tuesday, or a Wednesday, or a Thursday, or a Friday, or a Saturday; but I should quite expect to learn that, for everyone of them, there are ten here who were brought to Christ on the Sabbath. Heaven's gates seem to be set more widely open on that day than during the rest of the week, or else we have more inclination to enter them then. When the full history of the Sabbath shall be unfolded, we shall begin to know what infinite mercy it was, on

God's part, to set aside one day in seven specially for his worship and for our spiritual benefit. Thousands upon thousands, yea, millions upon millions have found Jesus very near, and rejoiced in him on the Lord's day.

Our Saviour was wont to use the day for public worship and for the pursuance of his high and holy calling of blessing the children of men. So, finding that on that day he could meet with many in the synagogue, he was accustomed to go there, and begin to teach. Amongst the people, who came on the particular Sabbath of which our text speaks, there was one poor woman, who was possessed by an evil spirit, and that evil spirit had, I suppose, so affected her nerves, and so influenced her entire system, that her spinal cord was greatly weakened. Evidently, she had suffered from the worst kind of curvature of the spine, for she was bent double, "and could in no wise lift up herself." I am afraid that, if any one of you had been in such a sad state as that, you would have said, "I shall never go to the synagogue any more;" and that your friends would have said, "We think you had better not go. You are such an object, and you are so unwell, that you will be best at home. You can read a good book there, and you can worship God just as acceptably in your own parlour as you can by going up to the public assembly of his people." I am also afraid that there are some here, who would have felt that they could be excused for a much lighter affliction than that poor woman suffered from, for I have known some, who could not come out to the service if it happened to be wet, though they went to business on wet days. Many people imagine that Sunday is a convenient day for being ill, and getting a little rest, so as to be fortified for the more important business which requires all their energies upon the Monday, and during the rest of the week. It seems as though they thought that cheating God out of his day is a very small matter, but that robbing themselves of even a portion of a day would greatly grieve them.

If this poor woman had not gone to the synagogue, I do not know that she would ever have met with Christ; so I commend her example to you, even if your bodily infirmities increase so much that you might make very justifiable excuses for being absent. There was a dear sister, now in heaven, who attended this Tabernacle for years, though she was so deaf that she never heard a word that was spoken. The reasons she gave for being here were that, at any rate, she could join in the hymns, and that, had she stayed away, she would have felt as if she was dissociated from the people of God; and other people, perhaps, might not have known the reason for her absence, and it might, therefore, have been a bad example to them. So she said, "Though I do not hear a word, I love to be there;" and she has told me that some of the happiest hours she has ever spent have been those when she has thus had communion with the people of God, although she could not fully understand all that was being said or done. In like manner, dear friends, as often as the people of God assemble for worship, come with them.

Notice one thing more about this woman. She did not get any

good through going to the synagogue, so long as she merely went there. She went to the synagogue bent double; and she came back bent double. If she went all those eighteen years, as I daresay she did, she was unable to lift up herself all that long time. Do not, I pray you,—you who are regular attendants at the house of God, and yet remain unsaved,—get into the notion that all you need is to attend divine service so many times on the Sabbath day or on week-nights; for, if you do, you will not be likely ever to get a blessing. This poor woman was not healed until she met with the Lord Jesus Christ, and I wish each one of you would come here saying, "Oh, that I might meet with Jesus to-day! Oh, that Jesus would meet with me!" It is a rule, with very few exceptions, that what a man fishes for he is most likely to catch. If any come here merely out of idle curiosity, it is possible, though not certain, that their curiosity will be satisfied; if any come to find fault, I have no doubt that they will find plenty to complain of; but if any of you have come determined to find Christ if he is to be found, it will be a very surprising thing if you have to go away without discovering him. This is what you really need if you are to be restored from all the ills that sin hath wrought, you must come to Christ himself.

I. Coming to the story of this poor woman, who was bent double, the first thing to be noted is that CHRIST'S COMPASSION WAS EXCITED. Jesus, while he was teaching in the synagogue, looked into the faces of his congregation; and, as he looked at them, he saw this woman, and his heart was at once moved with compassion towards her.

Note that *it was not her prayers that moved him*, or any plea she urged, for she did not speak to him, or plead with him. This was one of the cases in which no request for healing was presented to the Saviour; it was the sight of her misery that touched his heart. Perhaps, dear friends, if she had not been bent double, Christ's notice might not have been so quickly drawn to her; but because she was what people call "quite an object," and looked so sad, she attracted Christ's attention.

Notice, also, that *Christ was not moved to compassion by the prayers of anybody else for her.* Sometimes, he healed the sick when their fathers, or mothers, or friends brought them to him; but nobody brought this poor woman to Jesus. It does not seem as if anybody had sufficient compassion upon her to ask Jesus to heal her; or, if they had the compassion, they had not enough faith to believe that it was possible for her to be healed. There she was, a poor lone woman; and, possibly, it was the sight of her, with not a friend to help her, that touched Christ's heart, and moved him to fix his gaze upon her with a view to curing her sad complaint.

Notice, further, that *Christ's heart was not touched by any description which she gave him of her condition.* She gave him no description, and none was needed. He looked at her; that was all that was required, for he already knew all about her. She did not say, "I have been bound by Satan for eighteen years;" but Christ

knew that she had been. As he looked at her, he read her life story, as a man reads a book; and as he read the story, his heart was moved with compassion towards her. I wonder whether there is a soul here, that has not been asking the Lord for a blessing because that soul does not think it is likely that any blessing would come. I wonder whether there is anyone here, who has not dared to hope, and therefore has not dared to pray. My Master has a wonderful eye for such souls as these. There may have been, in that synagogue, a man wearing a gold ring, or a lady in a fine dress; but Christ did not notice them or their adornment. He picked out the person who was the most miserable, the most wretched, and who most needed his pity; and upon her he fixed those blessed eyes of his, with a compassion tender as the heart of a woman, and his whole soul was moved with pity for her because she was so grievously bound by the accursed power of Satan.

Now let us look at this woman's case a little more closely. She "was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself." That, in itself, was a painful thing; all the beauty of the woman's form and figure had gone; but being bent double, like that, must have produced most serious injury to every organ of the poor creature's body. I have no doubt that she was the subject of a thousand aches and pains through the posture in which she had been bent. Besides, it is a beautiful thing to be able to look up; but to be always obliged to look down, is something terrible. Through this trying affliction, the poor woman could not even see the Saviour; though, happily, he could see her, bent down as she was in the crowd. Instead of looking up with the face of a woman, she had to carry her head down towards the earth like a poor beast; and I should not wonder if the spirit of evil, that was in her, had made her feel unhappy, sorrowful, and almost despairing. I am also inclined to think that her mind may have been, like her body, bent towards the earth, and that this, too, was caused by Satanic influence. Perhaps the worst point about her case was that she had been for eighteen years in that sad condition. We do not know how it came about. She may, as a girl, have been able to run in the fields, and spend her days right merrily; but, on a sudden, perhaps, there came upon her this evil spirit, and she began to feel weakness of the spine; and, by-and-by, she was bent double, the sun of her life was put out, and her days were dark with sorrow and pain; and this had continued for eighteen years! What a long time that is to be such a sufferer! Eighteen years of happiness may pass very quickly; but eighteen years of pain is a very long period. This woman, for eighteen years, could not lift up her head to look at the sun; for eighteen years Satan had possessed her, and bowed her body together, and filled her mind with morbid thoughts, and dreary dreams, and terrible forebodings of dreadful things to happen in the future. Jesus knew all about those eighteen years, so we do not wonder that he had compassion upon her.

Possibly, in this congregation,—nay, I am quite sure I have some who, in soul, are like this poor woman was in body. You feel that

you would gladly give all you have to be saved, but you have long ago given up all hope of that. You did, at one time, hear the gospel with some degree of pleasure; but now, even while you listen to it, you keep on condemning yourself, and saying, "Salvation will never come to me." You have fallen into a condition of chronic melancholy; and you are so sad that friends, who used to cheer you, give you up in despair. Perhaps they call you foolish; but God knows that it is not folly, but a most grievous calamity that has happened to you. You cannot see Jesus, and you do not think that he can see you; but he does, and that is the only ray of hope for you. If I were to attempt to comfort you, I know that I should fail. If you are the person of whom I am thinking, no language from merely human lips will ever comfort you; there will have to be a divine voice reaching your inmost soul, or else you never will be loosed from your infirmity. We meet with some such persons every now and then, and we try to cheer them; it is right that we should do so. We pity them, and we are quite sure that our Lord Jesus Christ pities them still more, for there is not one of us whose heart is one half so tender towards his fellow-man as the heart of Christ himself is and must be; so, thou poor afflicted one, tossed with tempest, and not comforted,—thou down-trodden, sin-burdened soul, Jesus picks thee out of this throng, as he picked out that poor woman in the synagogue, that he may have mercy upon thee as he had upon her.

II. Secondly, JESUS ISSUED A COMMAND: "He called her to him."

Somehow or other, he managed to attract her attention; and then, probably not without considerable difficulty and pain, she made a great effort, and, at last, was able to see him; and he said something to this effect, "Will that poor woman, over yonder, who is bent double, come here to me?" Whatever words he may have used, we know that "he called her to him." Was not that command *a proof of great grace and condescension on Christ's part?* If he, the Messiah, who spake as never man spake, had called the ruler of the synagogue, and spoken familiarly to him, one might not have wondered so much; yet, out of all that throng, he did not call anyone except that poor decrepit, bowed-down, Satan-possessed daughter of Abraham; and we are expressly told that "He called her to him." He might have called to her from a distance, and said, "Be healed," but he did not, for he wished to show his special sympathy with such a sad case of suffering.

This call was not only given in great condescension, but it was also *given directly and personally to her:* "He called *her* to him." If Jesus had said, "I wish any person here, who suffers from a spirit of infirmity, to come to me," perhaps she might have come, perhaps she might not; but, instead of giving a general intimation like that, he fixed his eye on her, and "called her to him." Do any of you recollect a sermon—I do very well,—in which the preacher seemed to speak to nobody but yourself? I am fully persuaded that, if I had been, like the prisoners in some of our jails, shut up in a box where I could not see anybody but the preacher,—on the occasion when the Lord met with me, the preacher

could not have addressed himself more pointedly to me than he then did; and, on the occasion to which our text refers, Christ addressed himself to this woman personally and pointedly. I am hoping that the description I have given of the woman will make someone here say, "Ah, that is just my case!" Well, if so, O poor bowed-down daughter, poor languishing, desponding man, Jesus calls thee! If that description applies to thee, take the personal call to thyself, and say, "This condescending, pointed call is addressed to me."

Then do as this poor woman did; make it *a call which was promptly obeyed.* I daresay that the other people in the synagogue were very surprised that Christ called *her*, yet they made way for her; and,—strange object as she was,—perhaps, every step painful to her,—she managed to get where Christ was. As she was coming towards him, she heard him make this extraordinary statement, "Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity;" and when she got close to him, he laid both his hands on her, "and immediately she was made straight." How startled she must have been—even at Christ's first call, and little did she dream that he was going to cure her in such a fashion; and perhaps there is someone here whom Christ means to save, yet you have not even been thinking of him. Nevertheless, thus is it written in the counsels of eternity, "In the Tabernacle, on that summer Sunday night, such-and-such a soul must be delivered from the bondage of Satan." If it be so written, all the devils in hell cannot hold you captive beyond the appointed moment; and all the weight of your sins, and the evil habits that you have formed, and so long practised, shall burn like so much tow in a blazing fire, for God's eternal decree of mercy must be fulfilled; and he who comes to deliver you is none other than Christ, the Son of God, "mighty to save," before whom gates of brass are broken, and bars of iron are snapped in sunder. It was a glorious Sabbath for that poor woman when the Lord came forth, determined to heal her; and this will be a glorious Sabbath for you if the Lord now resolves to save you. He is even now calling you doubters, you desponding ones, you who have given up all hope; he is calling *you*, will you not come to him? Will you not trust him? He asks you to believe, not that you are good, but that he is good;—not that you can be healed by your neighbour, but that you can be healed by your Saviour; he asks you to come and listen to his gracious words while he says, "Thy sins are forgiven thee; go in peace." "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me, for I have redeemed thee."

III. We have so far noticed two things,—Christ's compassion excited, and his command issued; next, CHRIST'S POWER WAS MANIFESTED, and that was done in a very instructive way.

Jesus said to her, "*Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity.*" It is the Word of the Lord that has power in it. Whenever people are converted, and brought to Christ, it is by God's Word that the deed is done. Fine sermons never win souls; you may blaze away, young man, at a terrific rate, with your brilliant oratory, and your

fine pieces of poetry and quotations from eminent authors; and your peroration may be like the set piece at a display of fireworks, or the final burst of brightness with which it all ends; but all that will not save souls. What does save souls, then? Why, the Word of the Lord, the truth as it is in Jesus. I have noticed that the very words of Scripture are usually those that reach the heart; so, brethren and sisters, if you really want to find the Lord, give good heed to his Word; incline your ear, and come unto him; hear, and your soul shall live; for "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of the Lord."

In addition to speaking to the woman, *Christ laid his hands on her;* and that is the way that healing reaches sin-sick souls, by being brought into contact with Christ. When the pure humanity of Christ is recognized by us, and we perceive that he is our Brother and our Friend,—when we see that he bears both our sins and our sorrows, and carries our sicknesses in his own blessed Person, —when we realize that Christ has become our Representative and Surety,—a sense of peace comes to our soul. One reason why Jesus is so well qualified to save us is that—

> "He knows what sore temptations mean,
> For he has felt the same;"—

and he is, therefore, able to succour them that are tempted. Bowed-down woman, he puts his pierced hands upon thee; sorely troubled man, knowest thou not that God has taken thy nature upon himself and now says to thee, "Be thou comforted, for I have loved thee, and lived for thee, and died for thee"? God grant that you may feel that healing touch, and experience that divine deliverance this very hour!

That afflicted woman was healed immediately. One of the most wonderful things about Christ's cures was that, as a general rule, they were wrought in an instant. Can you imagine—I have often tried to do so,—the strange sensations that passed through some of those people when they were healed in a moment? Think of this poor woman,—eighteen years bent double, and then completely restored in a single instant! What a paradise must have been condensed into those few minutes! At first, I suppose she may have thought that she was only dreaming. What! was she able to stand upright, and to look into the face of him who had wrought such a wonderful cure for her? The rapture must have seemed almost too much for her when she realized that she was healed in an instant; and what if, just now, you should be saved in an instant? Remember that, to pardon sin, does not take God a single second; to save a soul from death and hell, is a more rapid work than for the lightning's bolt to fall from heaven. At one moment, a great load of sin may be upon you, and you may be fully conscious of the terrible burden; the next instant, every sin is gone, and you are conscious that it is so, and ready to leap for joy. Nobody can work this mighty miracle of mercy but the Lord Jesus Christ; yet he can do it more swiftly than I can speak of it. Oh, that some, who have been bound by Satan for eighteen years, or even longer,

may prove that they do not need eighteen minutes, or even eighteen seconds to get free; but may they now look to Jesus, and, believing in him, find instantaneous healing!

Once more, *this woman's cure was perfect*, as well as instantaneous. She did not lift herself up a little, and find that the Satanic bondage was being somewhat relaxed; but she was perfectly healed, and, better still, she was permanently healed. Her malady did not come back again. We have known doctors set a man up for a little time; and, after that, there has been a relapse; but this woman was both made straight and kept straight; and if we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, the salvation which he gives us, though it is instantaneous, is also perfect and everlasting, for whosoever trusts in Christ is saved immediately, and saved for ever. The gifts and calling of God are not matters for repentance on his part; he does not give salvation, and then take it back; but, having once given it, it remains the property of its possessor world without end. Then, what a precious Christ he is, and what a glorious Healer! I hope some sick one here is saying, "I wish he would look this way; oh, that Jesus would look on me!" He *is* looking upon thee, soul; hear what he says to thee, "Come unto me, trust in me." If you trust Jesus now, though you have been bent double these eighteen, these twenty-eight, these thirty-eight, these forty-eight, these fifty-eight, these sixty-eight,—these ninety-eight years, or these hundred and eighteen years, if such a person could be, if you did but look to him, come to him, trust him, in a moment he would make you whole. Oh, that you may do so!

IV. The last thing of all is this, CHRIST'S POWER WAS GLORIFIED.

It is said of this woman that, immediately, being made straight, she "glorified God." I should think she did. I should not mind having interruptions in our service from people who had found Christ. Our Methodist friends, in the olden times, when they found peace, used to shout "Hallelujah!" Well, if they really had found Christ, I think they were warranted in shouting. If ever a man might cry "Eureka! Eureka!" it was not the old philosopher, but the new-born child of God. Oh, what bliss it is to find the Saviour! If one were, for a little while, delirious with the excessive joy of being saved by grace, it might be excusable. It is said that some of our young converts are wonderfully enthusiastic. Yes, and well they may be. If you had received such a blessing as they have, you would be enthusiastic, too. If you have ever known the weight of sin crushing you to the dust, and then have had it suddenly borne away, you must have felt a mighty rebound when that great load has been removed. Could that healed woman help clapping her hands? Did she not stand up before the whole congregation in the synagogue, and say, "That man must be the Son of God, blessed be his holy name! After eighteen years of bondage, he has healed me in a moment." Or suppose that she was of the very quiet sort,—like the most of you, good sisters,—if she did not say a word, yet methinks she glorified God by simply standing up straight. If she did not say anything, but just walked away home, all who had known her, in her long time of affliction,

when they saw her stand up, a fine tall handsome woman, and knew that she must be the same person, must have been struck with wonder, and have said, "What new power is this? Who but God could thus have restored this woman?" I should like, brethren and sisters in Christ, that you and I should so live that our very lives should preach for Jesus Christ,—that people should only have to listen to our ordinary conversation, or to see the cheerfulness of our countenance, or to perceive the hopefulness of our spirit under trouble, our justness and integrity, our readiness to forgive, our zeal for God. It is good to preach with your tongue, if God has called you to do so; but never forget that the best preaching in the world is done by other members of the body. So, preach with your feet,—by your walk and conversation; let your whole being be a living, powerful, irresistible illustration of the power of Jesus Christ to bless and save.

It was so in the case of this woman, for I do not think that, after she had clapped her hands once, and stood up to testify before the whole congregation, that she had done glorifying God. Oh, no; all her life long, she would be glad to tell that story over and over again. I wonder whether she got married after that wonderful healing. It is very likely that she did; and if so, and she had children of her own, as they sat on her knee, one of the first stories she would tell them would be about when she was bent double for eighteen years, and then that wonderful Prophet called her to him in the synagogue, one Sabbath day, and made her straight in a moment. Perhaps she lived long enough to tell the story of Christ's suffering and death. If she ever saw any of her grandchildren, I am sure they would say, "Come, Granny, tell us your story," and she would tell it so well that they would want to hear it again and again.

I think that every Christian should go home to his friends, and tell them what great things the Lord hath done for him. There is a brother,—not far from me at this moment,—who had been a wild young man, fond of all the sports of the country. He went to London, and heard a sermon that was the means of his conversion. When he went home, one of his friends, with whom he used to follow the hounds, said to him, "Well, Tom, what is the best thing you heard in London?" And Tom replied, "The best thing I heard in London is that 'Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.'" "Oh!" said his companion, "you have gone mad." "No," answered Tom, "I was mad before I went to London, but I have got cured." I hope you will be able to give such testimony as that concerning what Jesus Christ has done for your souls, even as this poor woman "was made straight, and glorified God."

Some people may say to you, "You had better hold your tongue; for you will break down if you try to tell such a story as that." That would be the very best thing you could do. There is nothing like a break-down when you are telling your story of redeeming grace and dying love; it is the very glory of it when you break down with emotion, and cannot say any more, for your hearers will be all the more anxious to know the rest of it, and there will be

a deeper impression produced by your breaking down than there would have been if you had kept right on. But, anyhow, do tell the story; tell it as long as you have any breath in your body; tell how "Jesus hath done all things well," and saved your soul. Make heaven and earth to ring with the glad news; and when you go home to glory, tell the angels all about it, for they will be glad to hear your story, and they will break out into fresh praise as they listen to it. May God thus bless every one of you, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

PSALM IX.

This Psalm has a dedication which is very difficult to understand: "To the chief Musician upon Muth-labben. A Psalm of David." Either "Muth-labben" is the tune to which the Psalm was to be sung, or some musical instrument that is now forgotten; or else it alludes to Ben, who was one of the Levitical singers mentioned in 1 Chronicles xv. 18. In all probability, however, the true translation of the title is, "A Psalm on the death of the son," or "on the death of the champion," and it is thought by some that it was composed by David after the death of giant Goliath. If it be so, I think you will see, as we read the Psalm, that it well proclaims the victory which God had wrought.

Verse 1. *I will praise thee, O LORD, with my whole heart; I will shew forth all thy marvellous works.*

It will be well if we also resolve that we will praise the Lord. Most people have something or someone to praise, so let us select the Lord, even Jehovah, as the subject of our song. Let us resolve that we will praise him continually, for it may be difficult sometimes to do it. The heart may be very heavy; it may even be inclined to rebellion and murmuring; but let us make this strong resolution, in the power of God's grace: "I will shew forth all thy marvellous works." Here is room for great variety of praise, and here are abundant topics for praise, for there is no work of God which is not marvellous, and worthy of being praised with our whole heart. So, Lord, I will not be dumb. Thou hast given me a tongue; I am not like the brute beasts that cannot speak; my tongue is the glory of my frame, so with it I will show forth all thy marvellous works.

2. *I will be glad and rejoice in thee: I will sing praise to thy name, O thou most High.*

Get thee up, then, my soul, out of the dark places of thy despondency. Rise, my drooping spirit, to something higher and better. If thou canst not be glad in anything else, be glad in thy God;—be glad that thou hast a God, and such a God, and that he is thy God still. Whatever else thou mayest have lost, thou hast not lost him.

"I will be glad and rejoice." The reduplication of the words indicates a double joy,—a double gladness, as the apostle says, "Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice." Be glad twice over, for you have double cause for rejoicing in the Lord.

3. *When mine enemies are turned back, they shall fall and perish at thy presence.*

As much as to say, "The presence of God is quite enough to make my adversaries flee,—yea, and utterly to cut them off." As John Wesley said, "The best of all is, God is with us;" and if God be with us, it matters little to us who are against us.

4. *For thou hast maintained my right and my cause; thou satest in the throne judging right.*

One of our noblemen has this for his motto, "I will maintain it;" but the Christian has a far better one: "Thou hast maintained my right." If David sang thus after he had hurled the stone from his sling into Goliath's skull, he might well magnify the name of the Lord, who had maintained the rights of his people, and put the uncircumcised champion of the Philistines to confusion and death.

5, 6. *Thou hast rebuked the heathen, thou hast destroyed the wicked, thou hast put out their name for ever and ever. O thou enemy,—*

You can conceive of David, standing on the prostrate form of his fallen foe, and looking on that gigantic countenance and those mighty limbs, crying out, "O thou enemy,"—

6, 7. *Destructions are come to a perpetual end: and thou hast destroyed cities; their memorial is perished with them. But the LORD shall endure for ever: he hath prepared his throne for judgment.*

"Thou hast destroyed cities," but thou couldst not destroy God. When thou didst defy the armies of other nations, thou couldst easily put them to rout; but when thou didst defy the living God, then there was an end of thee, for thou couldst not overcome him, nor overcome his people. Blessed be God for this, our faith is founded upon a rock that never shall be removed, and our confidence is fixed upon One who can never fail us, and whose truth must stand fast for ever.

8—10. *And he shall judge the world in righteousness, he shall minister judgment to the people in uprightness. The LORD also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble. And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee:*

The basis of faith is knowledge, and there is no knowledge like that which comes from experience. If you know the name of God as Jehovah,—the self-existent and ever-living God,—you will have good reason for trusting him; and, then, if you know his many precious names,—such as Jehovah-Tsidkenu, the Lord our Righteousness, Jehovah-Nissi, the Lord my banner; Jehovah-Jireh, the Lord will provide; Jehovah-Shalom, the peace-giving God; and Jehovah-Shammah, the God who is there where his people are; —yea, if any one name of God be fully understood by you, you will put your trust in him.

10—12. *For thou, LORD, hast not forsaken them that seek thee. Sing praises to the LORD, which dwelleth in Zion: declare among the people his doings. When he maketh inquisition for blood, he remembereth them:*

When the great Coroner's inquest shall be held upon all who have wrongly suffered, the commission will open by an enquiry concerning the blood of the martyrs: "When he maketh inquisition for blood, he remembereth them." His suffering ones, who laid down their lives for the truth's sake, shall find that their blood was precious in his sight.

12. *He forgetteth not the cry of the humble.*

Is there not consolation in these words for some of you? You have been humbled, and brought down from your high places; now, then, is your time to cry; and when you do so, you will prove that "he forgetteth not the cry of the humble." There are many, who give heed to the petitions of their needy fellow-creatures, and feel their force, for a time; but they are engaged in business, or occupied in other ways, and they soon forget. Other things crowd out the needy one's petition, and so he is left unhelped. But it is never so with God: "He forgetteth not the cry of the humble." Notice, in the next verse, how David avails himself of that truth. He

seems to say, "Is it true that God does not forget the cry of the humble? Then I will cry unto him, and my humble cry shall go up to his ear, and to his heart."

13. *Have mercy upon me, O Lord;*—

What a blessed prayer that is,—a prayer useful on all occasions,—under a sense of sin, or under a load of sorrow,—burdened with labour, or crushed with despondency. It is a prayer which is like the cherubim's sword, which turned every way; you may use it as you will: "Have mercy upon me, O Lord;"—

13. *Consider my trouble which I suffer of them that hate me, thou that liftest me up from the gates of death:*

What a lift that is,—lifted up from the gates of death into life, and ultimately into heaven! What an almighty God our Lord proves himself to be at a dead lift! When every other arm is paralyzed, he comes to us, and lifts us up from the gates of death.

14. *That I may shew forth all thy praise in the gates of the daughter of Zion:*

From the gates of death to the gates of Zion, is the lift which God gives to his poor suffering people.

14, 15. *I will rejoice in thy salvation. The heathen are sunk down in the pit that they made:*

If you picture David with the carcase of the giant before him, the Philistines put to ignominious flight, and the Israelites in full pursuit after them, you can understand his saying, "The heathen are sunk down in the pit that they made."

15, 16. *In the net which they hid is their own foot taken. The* LORD *is known by the judgment which he executeth: the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands. Higgaion. Selah.*

The probable meaning of these words is, "Consider and pause." They are musical rests, perhaps; but they also suggest to us how well it is, in our reading of the Scriptures, sometimes to stop a while, and inwardly digest the words that we have read.

17. *The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.*

Even if they are not outwardly as wicked as other men are, yet their forgetfulness of God is the highest form of injustice to him; it is treason against the majesty of heaven; it is robbing God of what is his right; it is a combination of everything that is evil.

18—20. *For the needy shall not alway be forgotten: the expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever. Arise, O* LORD; *let not man prevail: let the heathen be judged in thy sight. Put them in fear, O* LORD; *that the nations may know themselves to be but men.*

They boast that they are men, and that they quit themselves like men. Yet let them know that, although they are men, they are only men, with all the infirmities and imperfections of men, and that there is a God who will, in due time, let men know that they are but men, and that the best of men are but men at the best.

20. *Selah.*

Pause again, think over what we have been reading, and lift up your heart in prayer to God, seeking the aid of the Holy Spirit to apply the truth to your soul.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—9, 146.

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THE FREE-AGENCY OF CHRIST.

A Sermon

PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JULY 14TH, 1904,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, June 18th, 1876.

"And he cometh to Bethsaida; and they bring a blind man unto him, and besought him to touch him. And he took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town; and when he had spit on his eyes, and put his hands upon him, he asked him if he saw ought. And he looked up, and said, I see men as trees walking. After that he put his hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up: and he was restored, and saw every man clearly. And he sent him away to his house, saying, Neither go into the town, nor tell it to any in the town."—Mark viii. 22—26.

THERE are several points in which these people, who brought the blind man to Christ, deserve our commendation and our imitation. They believed that Christ could open that blind man's eyes. In like manner, may we all believe that Jesus can save our relatives, and friends, and acquaintances. If we are ourselves saved, let us always be firmly convinced that he is also able to save any whom we bring before him in prayer. Let us never give way to despair concerning any person, however far he may have gone into sin. Who but the Divine Saviour could open the eyes of this blind man? Nobody; yet he could do it. So, if your friend be very sinful and hardened, no one but the Lord can save him; but he can do it, so believe that he can do it, and in prayer bring your friend to the Saviour as these people of Bethsaida brought this blind man to Christ.

Their faith was of a practical kind. They were not content simply to believe that Christ could heal this man, and then to remain sitting still. True faith is active faith, so these people brought the blind man to the Saviour in whom they believed. If you are praying for any man's salvation, mind that you use the means that will best help to bring about that result. If there be any instrumentality which God peculiarly blesses to the conversion of souls, take care that you bring your friend under that instrumentality, in the hope that God will bless it to him.

Further, note that the blind man was willing to be brought to Jesus. Evidently, he had at least as much faith as his friends had in the power of Jesus to open his eyes. It was a very hopeful case

when the man and his friends believed in Christ's power to heal him; it was not likely to be long, then, before the miracle of mercy would be wrought.

Observe, also, that the faith of these friends of the blind man was further proved by their earnest prayers on his behalf. They brought him to Jesus, "and *besought him* to touch him." It was prayer of a very forceful kind, as the word "besought" clearly implies. It was also a very plain prayer; they did not make use of fine language, or beat about the bush, so as to leave anyone in doubt as to what they wanted for their friend; but they brought him to Jesus, "and besought him to touch him." They desired that the blind man should be made to see, and they thought that result would follow from Christ's touch, so they asked for that boon; and, dear friends, whenever you pray for the conversion of anyone, mind that you pray straight for it. There are prayers, that one has heard in prayer-meetings, which seem to go all round the world, and never to come to the case in hand. Let it not be so with you, especially in your private prayers; but pray for Jane, pray for Thomas, pray for your children or friends by name. Believingly, earnestly, in a business-like way, put their case before the Lord Jesus Christ, just as, if they were ill, you would state their symptoms to the best physician you could find, and ask him to prescribe for them.

In all these points that I have mentioned, these people are to be commended and imitated,—they believed in Christ's power to heal the blind man, they brought their friend to him, and they besought Christ's favour for him. In doing so, however, they made the mistake of prescribing to Christ the way in which they thought their friend should be healed: they "besought him *to touch him.*" It was quite the usual thing; indeed, it was almost universally the Saviour's rule, to heal sick folk by laying his hands on them; and having seen him do this, perhaps, on several occasions, these people had imbibed the notion that Christ healed the sick by his touch,—that this was the special or the only way in which his power was manifested. They did not appear to know that it operated in any other way, so they "besought him to touch him." Possibly, they had more confidence in the touch than they had in the Christ who gave it; at all events, they thought that the touch was essential to the cure, and did not realize that Christ could cure the sick in any way that he pleased; not only by his touch, but by his word; or, if he willed it, even without a word. Thus, they did, as it were, tie the Saviour down to one particular method; and their faith, though it was real, was weak; though it was acceptable as far as it went, it was imperfect, there was a measure of ignorance mingled with it. I am going to deal only with that point, as I expect that some of us are making the mistake that these people made.

I. My first observation will be, that IT IS A COMMON WEAKNESS OF FAITH TO EXPECT GRACE TO COME IN A CERTAIN FIXED WAY.

Just as these people expected the healing of the blind man to come by the touch of Christ's hand, so many expect *deliverance from trouble* to come in a certain specified way. You know it is so with many of you to whom I am speaking. You have taken your

troubles to the Lord,—you have told him all about your case, and you have entrusted it to him, but you have laid down the plan by which God is to work on your behalf. You remember how he delivered you on a former occasion, and you expect him to deliver you in exactly the same way again. Or you have been reading the biography of some worthy man, who cast his care upon the Lord, and he was helped in a certain manner, so you think you will be helped in the same manner. But, very likely, God will do nothing of the kind; he is not bound to give you any blessing in the particular way which you choose to select. He has his own method of giving a blessing, and his own plan of warding off evil, so you must leave the "how" and the "when" entirely with him. It is useless for you to think of mapping out the route for him to whom the psalmist said, "Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known."

The same error also occurs, with many, *in seeking sanctification and growth in grace.* They are moved to ask, "Lord, is this how we are to grow in grace?" Then the great Husbandman says, "Yes, 'tis even so; good vines must feel the pruning knife; that is the way to make them more fruitful." A perplexed soul enquires, "Dear Master, is this the way that I am to be made like thee?" And he replies, "Yes; I was made perfect through suffering, and thou must have fellowship with me, in this respect, if thou art to become like me." We had marked out quite another mode of procedure; our Lord's hands were to be laid upon us, and so we were to be blessed. Yet, he knows best; therefore, let us say, "Even so, Father; for so it seems good in thy sight."

The same mistake is often made *with regard to conversion,*—the conversion of others, or our own conversion. I hope I am addressing many persons, who are earnestly seeking faith in Christ, or who already have a measure of faith in him; yet they have never obtained the full assurance of peace and rest, because they have looked for it to come to them in a certain way. You expected to receive the blessing of forgiveness while you were listening to the preaching of the gospel; or having heard that many people have been converted under such-and-such a preacher, you have gone to hear him, earnestly praying all the while that the Lord would save you through that man's preaching; yet he has not done so. It may be that he has ordained to bless you through some other means; well, be not cast down on that account, but be thankful if he blesses you anyhow. Possibly, you went with the great crowd that gathered to hear some notable evangelist; and, after the public service, you went into the enquiry-room, as you heard that many had been led to Christ in that way, and you thought it would be so with you, but it was not. Well, be not surprised or sad if that is the case; it was not your place to dictate the way in which the Lord should reveal himself to you. It may be that you heard of a certain book being very useful to enquirers and seekers, and you said, "I will read that book, and ask the Lord to bless it to me." You did so, yet you were none the better, and you blamed yourself for not getting any good out of the book which had been blessed to others.

Yet you must remember that God has his own ways and times of revealing himself to his people. It is quite possible that you thought too much of that preacher, or that enquiry-room, or that good book, and that you did not think enough of Jesus himself; and, probably, if you had looked to him rather than to the instrumentality, you would long ere this have had your eyes opened, and have seen everything clearly. You laid down certain conditions for Christ, but he would not comply with those conditions, but acted according to the good pleasure of his own will. It is the same when we try to lay down conditions with regard to the conversion of our friends. I remember well the story of two Christian gentlemen, who had a young companion who was about to start on a long voyage;—I think, to China;—and they persuaded him to spend a week with them, and they made it a matter of earnest prayer that, during that week, their young friend might be converted to God. They had real faith, and they very properly used the means which they thought likely to be blessed to him. They induced him to attend various places of worship during the week, taking him to hear a different preacher each night; but apparently in vain. At last, there remained only the Friday night, and only one man whom they had not taken their young friend to hear; that was good old Rowland Hill, and they had left him to the last because he was said to be so eccentric, and so likely to say strange things, which they were afraid might disgust the young man. They prayed very earnestly that God would keep Mr. Hill from saying anything amusing, lest their friend should be made to laugh; but, that night, the preacher was more humorous than usual, and Surrey Chapel was made to ring again and again as peals of laughter followed the telling of some extraordinary story in his inimitable way, and the very proper gentlemen were quite shocked and saddened. Among other things, Mr. Hill said that, during the day, he had seen some pigs follow a butcher into the slaughter-house, and he could not make out why they did so until he noticed that the butcher had his pocket full of peas, which he threw out to the swine, and so induced them to follow him to their death. "Then," added Mr. Hill, "I understood why people follow the devil though he leads them to death; it is because he draws them after him with the pleasures of the world, as the butcher drew the pigs after him with the peas." Those gentlemen thought it was a pity that the preacher spoke like that; and when they came out, they felt sorry they had taken their young friend to hear him. But he walked along very quietly for a time, and then said, "That was a very striking story about the pigs and the peas, and most appropriate to my own case. I have gone after sin for the sake of the pleasure of it, without thinking of the consequences, and now I see what a fool I have been." That rather rough illustration was the means of leading the young man to lay hold on Christ as his Saviour before he went on his way. Those two gentlemen brought their friend to Christ, as these people brought the blind man to him, "and besought him to touch him;" but the Lord Jesus chose to work by the very instrumentality of which his followers were afraid. He often uses very strange means;

—means we do not like, perhaps;—means which would never occur to us as helpful; and he does this to teach us that the power to cure is not in the man, or in the means, or in the place, or in the excitement of the hour; but it is in himself alone, and he works just how he wills and when he wills; and when it is his set time to save a sinner, he uses his own instrument, whether it be Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas,—the learned, or the eloquent, or the impulsive.

II. Secondly, THE LORD TAKES CARE TO PREVENT THE DISHONOUR WHICH WOULD THUS COME TO HIM.

Observe how he did it in this case. They brought this blind man to him, and besought him to touch him; so, first, *Christ did touch him, yet did not heal him:* "He took the blind man by the hand." That was certainly touching him; yet his eyes were not opened. Jesus kept his hand on the blind man, "and led him out of the town;" but he was still a blind man. How very surprised the poor man himself must have been! His own faith led him to expect that, if Christ would but touch him, his eyes would be opened. He must have had a feeling of astonishment and despondency when he felt that touch,—a prolonged touch,—a touch that gripped his hand, and led him through the town, right away past the last of the houses, and out into the fields,—yet a touch that did not enable him to see. But did not that very disappointment make the man realize, once for all, that it was not merely Christ's touch that opened blind eyes, but Christ himself who wrought the miracle? It was evident that he could, if he pleased, give a touch that did not open the eyes of the blind. Manifestly, there was no magic about the mere touch of Christ's fingers, for his fingers were touching the blind man's fingers all the while, yet he did not even begin to see anything.

This is the lesson which the Lord is still teaching us. The preaching of the gospel is the great means of the salvation of sinners; for "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." But if you look merely to the preaching, and especially if you look simply to the preacher, instead of looking to Christ himself, it is more than likely that the preaching will be in vain so far as you are concerned. You may listen to it attentively, and even ask God to bless you by means of it; yet it may be to you only like Christ's hand was to the blind man. It is even possible for the gospel to be a savour of death unto death, as well as of life unto life; and even to those whom Christ means to bless, it may be without power so long as they look to it instead of looking to Christ.

The next thing that Christ did for the blind man was this. *His friends expected that Christ would heal the man before the crowd, but he did not.* They probably thought, "Now, if the Saviour will but put his fingers on our friend's eyes, and make him see, all the onlookers will know of it, their faith will be strengthened, and Christ will be glorified." But Christ will not do anything to the blind man before the crowd. He takes him by the hand, and leads him right away from the throng. He will not begin to operate upon him while anybody else is near, but conducts him away where he will be quite alone. Now, in the preaching of the gospel, it is a very usual thing for our Lord Jesus Christ to save men in the

crowd there and then; many thousands of souls have heard of Jesus, and believed in him, and found salvation, in the midst of a throng of their fellows. But we nowhere read, in his Word, that he intends always to save people in throngs and crowds. On the contrary, there are some, to whom he seems to say, "I shall not save you here; come away from the public assembly, and get into the quiet of your own home." Do not object, and say, "But, Lord, I thought I could believe in thee, here and now, and so find peace." That is not his will, for your believing is to be exercised out in the fields where you can be quite alone, or upstairs in that little room of yours, where, at dead of night, you shall sit up in your bed, with nobody near you, and turn over in your mind the truths you have been hearing, and there and then put your trust in Jesus. It is dishonouring to Christ for us to say, "If we can only get large companies of people together, and arouse them with stirring appeals and sweet singing, we are sure to get them converted." The crowd has really nothing to do with the matter of conversion; and while Christ, blessed be his name, does save many in the crowd, yet, if we get to regard the presence of the crowd as essential to the conversion of anybody, he will very likely take that individual apart, as he did with this blind man when he took him by the hand, and led him out of the town.

The next point is this. *Our Lord usually wrought his miracles instantaneously, yet he would not be tied down always to work in the same way.* So this blind man is gradually enabled to see; first, only partial sight is granted to him, then the obscuring film is removed, and he sees clearly. There is a deep spiritual lesson for us in this action of our Lord. Perhaps somebody has said, "I know that So-and-so found peace with God in a moment; and I cannot believe until I get the blessing in the same way." My dear friend, let me tell you very solemnly that you must not presume to make any stipulation with Christ as to how you are to believe, and when you are to believe. If you mean to be his follower, you will have to get rid of that proud spirit, and leave the Lord to save you in his own way. Some find joy and peace in an instant; but there are others, who first receive a little light, and then a little more, and a little more, till gradually they see as clearly as this man did. In the tropics, the sun seems, in the morning, to leap up the horizon, and to turn darkness into light in a very short period; but, in this country, the sun gives us longer notice of his coming; he shoots many arrows of light before he himself, with rosy steps, advances in the full glory of the dawning day. It is just so in the spiritual realm; there are some tropical Christians, who pass from darkness to light in a moment; others are of the temperate zone,—slower in their growth, yet they receive the light just as surely as the others. When you read the story of anyone's conversion, do not say, "That is the way I am going to be saved." Of course, there is only one way of salvation; that is, by faith in Christ; but there are many ways in which Christ gives this great blessing to the sons of men, and you must leave him to work in his own way. The Spirit, like the wind, bloweth where he listeth, and when he listeth; and, if you

try to dictate to him, you will grieve him, and miss the blessing you desire to obtain.

Further, *the Saviour employed means which these people had not suggested, and which probably appeared to them to be quite unsuitable.* In a similar fashion, my friend, I hope that you are going to be saved, and I urge you to look to Christ that you may obtain salvation through him; yet it is quite possible that you are not going to be saved in the way you think. You are very fond of your minister, and he is very helpful to you in many ways; yet, probably, God means to bless you by some other servant of his, perhaps, by some godly woman. The Lord has, many a time, brought "her ladyship" into the light by means of the cook or the housemaid; and "my lord" has been brought to the Saviour by a man whom he would hardly have employed to black his boots. The Lord can use whatever means he likes, and sometimes he uses means which we should never have thought of using.

I have heard of a father, who used to pray much for the conversion of his sons and daughters, yet he did not see one of them saved. When he came to die, his family had all grown up, and they had themselves become the heads of other households. He sent for them to come to his bedside, and he prayed very earnestly that he might die so joyful and triumphant a death that they might be convinced of the beauty and power of vital godliness, and seek the Saviour for themselves. That was his plan of bringing his family to Jesus, but it pleased the Lord to allow him to be in great pain of body and much distress of mind; indeed, he was in such anguish of heart that his testimony to the power of grace was of a very negative character. He had no songs of triumph, but he had many moans of pain and many questions about his spiritual state. God puts many of his children to bed in the dark, but they are his children all the same. It is of the wicked that it is written, "There are no bands in their death: but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men." God's best servants often pass away under a cloud, and it was so with the friend of whom I am speaking. One of his last utterances was the expression of his intense regret that his sons would be confirmed in their unbelief by his experience in his dying hour; yet mark what really happened. They all knew of his genuine piety. They had not a doubt about that matter, for they reckoned him to be one of the best of men; and, as they gathered in the house after the funeral, the eldest son said to them, "Brothers and sisters, our father died a very sad death, yet we know that his soul was saved. We all know that he trusted Christ as his Saviour, and that he lived a most godly life. Now," said he, "if such a man as our father found it hard to die, think how much harder it will be for us if we have to die without a Saviour." The same thought had occurred to the rest of the family, and it was not long before they all sought and found their father's God and Saviour. You see, the Lord really heard his prayer, and granted him the desire of his heart, though not in the way he expected; and he will hear you, my brother, and he will hear you, my sister, but the answer may not come in your

way. The Lord has his own way of doing his own work; and, sometimes, he adopts very singular methods to teach us that there is no power in the method he uses, but that all the power lies in himself.

III. The third thing to be noted in this narrative is that OUR BLESSED LORD TAKES CARE TO HONOUR FAITH EVEN WHEN HE REBUKES ITS WEAKNESS. He did not open this blind man's eyes in the way his friends asked him to do it; but he did open his eyes, and he did a great deal more than that for him; and I want you to notice how the Lord Jesus honoured the imperfect faith of this man and his friends, though he also rebuked its imperfections.

First, *our Lord condescended to guide this blind man.* This is one of the most beautiful incidents in Scripture; I should like to meet with an artist who could worthily depict Christ leading that blind man out of the town. It is not everybody who would undertake such a task as that, but our Lord condescended to take by the hand this poor fellow, who could not see anything, and lead him right away from the crowd that had gathered. It was something to be that blind man; I think I would be willing to lose the sight of my eyes if I might be led by Christ, as he was. O blessed blindness, that brings Christ into such close contact with this poor man! Was he not greatly honoured? Surely, he was the most highly honoured blind man who ever lived, thus to have Christ to guide him. Sometimes, you see a blind man led by a dog; and, sometimes, by a child; but Christ himself undertakes the task in this case. The blind man believed in Jesus sufficiently to be led by him, and Jesus led him further than he expected.

Note, next, that *Christ left all the rest of the crowd for the sake of this one blind man.* I do not know how many there were to whom Christ was preaching, but he said "Good-bye" to them all that he might take this poor blind man by the hand, and lead him out of the town. Have not you, dear friend, found the Lord Jesus Christ deal with you, sometimes, as if you were the only person in the world? Has not his love been so graciously manifested that you have said, "Why, if I were the most important person in the world, he could not do more for me than he has done." So, on this occasion, Christ left everybody else, for the time being, that he might devote all his attention to this one blind man. He seemed to say to him, "My friend, I am going to take you into my surgery, that I may perform an operation upon you, and I want you to be alone with me that I may give all my thoughts to your case."

So, putting all others aside, "Christ begins to cure this blind man. For ointment, he uses the spittle from his mouth; then he lays his hands upon the man, and asks him whether he can see anything. After his answer, telling that the cure is working, Christ puts his hands again upon the blind man's eyes, and makes him look up. Christ does not give his system a shock by revealing the full light to him all at once, but he works the miracle as gently as the wisest nurse or the most loving mother might have done. So it comes to pass that, although the man does not get what his friends asked for him, he gets something a great deal better, for Christ gave him a complete cure, so that "he saw every man clearly." Christ

did not send him away with one eye opened and the other still remaining closed, or revealing just a little light in one corner of it. Christ did not leave him cross-eyed or short-sighted, but he "saw every man clearly."

It seems to me that Christ must have cured this man entirely out of love to him. He may have cured some others partly with the view of their publishing his name and fame so as to attract other sufferers to him; but he did not cure this man for that reason; for, when he had opened hs eyes, he said to him, "Do not go into the town, and do not talk of this miracle to anybody who comes from the town. You can go home to your own village, and tell the people there all about what I have done; but, otherwise, this is a matter between you and me alone."

Now, dear friends, you who are seeking the Lord, but cannot find him, is there not a lesson for you in this narrative? I pray you to give up dictating to the Lord as to how he is to save you, for he has a far better way of working than you have even dreamt of at present; and, possibly, his way will be to get you quite alone, and gradually to lead you into the light. He means to have some private talk with you, not meant for any other ear. He means to make himself known to you in a peculiarly special manner;—not in your way, but in his own far superior way. Then, why do you object to his plan? Your one business is to believe in him, to rely wholly on him, and to praise him for his great goodness to you. I pray you, do not quibble about ways and methods, but trust the Lord fully. If you do so, it shall not be long before you will get the light, and the joy, and the peace for which you are praying.

How long I was myself dictating to God instead of trusting him! I thought I must have a certain amount of conviction of sin before I could be saved. I really had it all the while, though I did not know that I had it. I thought I must feel a certain weight of guilt. I was feeling it; and, for that very reason, I thought I was not. I might have been spared much needless suffering if I had only believed what the Lord had taught me in his Word, that I had nothing to do with feeling burdens or anything else by way of preparation for coming to Christ, but that I had to come to him just as I was. If I could not come to him with a broken heart, I was to come to him to break it. If I did not feel any true conviction of sin, or a single atom of repentance in my soul, there was all the more reason why I should come to him, and, without money, buy all that I needed. So, poor blind ones, come to my Master, blind as you are; but do not lay down any rules or regulations as to how he is to save you, for he will do it in his own way, which is, after all, the best possible way.

IV. Now I close with a fourth remark. WHEN THE LORD HAS TAKEN PAINS TO PREVENT US FROM ATTACHING TOO GREAT IMPORTANCE TO THE MEANS THEMSELVES, HE PUTS HONOUR UPON THE MEANS.

I have already called your attention to this fact. The blind man's friends trusted too much to Christ's touch, and too little to Christ himself. He wanted to cure them of that evil, so he touched the man, yet left him unhealed. But after he had taken him out of

the town, and away from the people, he did, after all, heal him by a touch, or something more than a touch, for he put his hands upon him twice; so that, though there was a touch that did not heal, there were afterwards two touches that did. It was as though Christ would say to them, "How foolish you are to trust in the touch instead of in me! But, when I have cured you of that folly, then will I put honour upon my touch, which is the method by which I usually heal the sick."

It is so, too, with you who hear the gospel, yet who seem to hear it in vain, for the Lord means you not to trust in your hearing, but to trust in him. After he has cured you of that evil, I should not wonder if you hear the gospel twice as well as anybody else does, and I expect that it will come with double power to your soul. It is so in this narrative, and it is often so as a matter of spiritual experience. When the Lord has taken us away from trusting in ordinances, then he shows us what great blessings come from the ordinances when they are rightly observed. When we trust to the preacher, or the preaching, we get nothing; but when we trust in Christ alone, then he makes the preacher, and the preaching, and other means of grace to be the channels of blessing to our souls.

Then, lastly, *the Lord sent that man home without letting anyone in that neighbourhood know of the cure he had wrought.* Christ thereby seems to say, "There are many, whom I heal, of whom nobody knows." There is a message to us preachers in this incident; Christ seems to say to us, "This is often my way of saving souls. I give the healing touch, but you do not know anything about it." Certainly, none of us can calculate the amount of virtue which pours out of Christ through the preaching of the Word. The last great day alone will reveal the myriads of men and women, who have been brought to Jesus through the preaching of the gospel, but, who, nevertheless, were never known to the preacher himself, although they were converted through his instrumentality. O brothers and sisters, keep on telling poor sinners about the Saviour! Try to bring them into contact with Christ. You may not actually see him open their eyes, for he may take them out of the town, and work the great miracle privately. You bring them into contact with Christ; and, although that may not save them, it will lead up to their salvation; and, therefore, you will be doing good service to them and to your Master, too. Preach away, my brother, and preach nothing but Jesus. Teach your classes, my brothers and sisters, nothing but Jesus, and seek to get his hand into contact with the children of men. But, when you work, and when you pray, do not lay it down that God must bless souls by you, or by anybody else; but say to him that, if he will but save them anyhow, you will be content and thankful. And as for you, poor sinners, seek salvation by simply trusting in Jesus; and if you have not any clear vision of him at this moment, get you to your knees, and rise not till you have found him as your Saviour. He has his own ways and methods of working; so you must trust him, and not the method, and he will bless you with life eternal. So may he do, for his own name's sake! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

LUKE IV. 33—41 ; AND V. 12—17.

We are going to read some verses in the fourth and fifth chapters of Luke's Gospel ;—hospital chapters, I may call them, for they record many marvellous cures which were wrought by the great Physician, the Lord Jesus Christ. We shall begin at the 33rd verse of the fourth chapter.

Chapter iv. Verses 33, 34. *And in the synagogue there was a man, which had a spirit of an unclean devil, and cried out with a loud voice, saying, Let us alone ; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth ?*

There are many people, at the present day, who have this evil spirit in them ; and they also say, "Let us alone." They do not want to have their consciences disturbed ; they would rather sleep on until they wake up in another world where their awaking will be too late to avail for their repentance.

34. *Art thou come to destroy us ? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God.*

That is an old trick of the devil, to acknowledge the excellence of the Preacher that he may avoid the personal application of the sermon; and there are many people, who are quite satisfied when they have said concerning the Word which they have heard, "Yes, it was all true, and it was very well put." But that is not the purpose of a true minister of the gospel,—simply to win the compliment of your approbation ; he wants to see the devil cast out of you, and to stir up your hearts so that you will no longer let religion alone, but will flee to Christ to save you.

35, 36. *And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him. And when the devil had thrown him in the midst, he came out of him, and hurt him not. And they were all amazed, and spake among themselves, saying, What a word is this ! for with authority and power he commandeth the unclean spirits, and they come out.*

Ah, dear friends ! when we see what the gospel can do,— how it can reclaim the thief, how it can make chaste the harlot, how it can lift up the very vilest of men from the lowest depths of degradation,—we may well say, "What a Word is this !" The power of the gospel does not lie in the preacher, but in the truth which he proclaims. What a Word is this, which not only knocks at the door of the human heart, but which carries on its girdle the key with which it can open that door ! It does not simply invite the sinner to trust the Saviour, but there is a power, which goes with it, which sweetly woos the heart until the unwilling become willing, and those who have hitherto despised God and his great salvation, cheerfully yield themselves to him. Christ not only comes to those who seek him ; but, in the splendour of his grace, he is often found of them that sought him not ; yea, those who cried "Let us alone," are not let alone, for grace brings them beneath her blessed sway.

37—39. *And the fame of him went out into every place of the country round about. And he arose out of the synagogue, and entered into Simon's house. And Simon's wife's mother was taken with a great fever ; and they besought him for her. And he stood over her, and rebuked the fever ; and it left her : and immediately she arose and ministered unto them.*

Here is a type of another form of the disease of sin. This time it is a hot and burning fever, and there are many men who have the fever of pride, or the fever of ambition, and some who have the fever of impetuous lust. Yet we have never read of such a cure as this in the lives of the doctors of ancient or modern times. They have wrought remarkable cures by long dosing the patient with various drugs, but Christ just stood over Peter's wife's mother, and rebuked the fever, and instantly it fled.

40. *Now when the sun was setting,*

Ah, it is setting with some of you! Those grey hairs are like the streaks of light upon the horizon as the sun goes down; but blessed be God, he who heals the spiritually sick in the early morning, by bringing children to himself, does not cease to work until the sun goes down.

40. *All they that had any sick with divers diseases brought them unto him; and he laid his hands on every one of them, and healed them.*

Oh, that he would do that just now! Still is he mighty to save; oh, that he would now display his ancient power, and lay his healing hands on every one of you! What fame he would get if he would do so! What joy there would be if all of you should now be turned to God! And why should it not be? Christ is able to do this; then, let us ask it of him in earnest believing prayer.

41. *And devils also came out of many, crying out, and saying, Thou art Christ, the Son of God. And he rebuking them suffered them not to speak: for they knew that he was Christ.*

Perhaps they thought that their testimony would tend to blacken his character. We are, in a sense, pleased when bad men find fault with us, for that is really the best commendation that they can give us; but when they begin to praise us, we feel suspicious that there is something wrong. We think of how Christ acted when the devils said to him, "Thou art Christ, the Son of God;" and we would fain have them hold their tongues. What a vile thing sin is, for it makes even good words to be evil when they come out of sinful lips!

Chapter v. Verse 12. *And it came to pass, when he was in a certain city, behold a man full of leprosy: who seeing Jesus fell on his face, and besought him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.*

There was not much faith there, but faith even as a grain of mustard seed will serve; and therefore Christ did not refuse the poor leper's plea.

13—15. *And he put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will: be thou clean. And immediately the leprosy departed from him. And he charged him to tell no man: but go, and shew thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing, according as Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them. But so much the more went there a fame abroad of him: and great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by him of their infirmities.*

Oh, that sinners would come to Christ in this spirit now,—"to hear, and to be healed by him of their infirmities"! Some of you have come to hear, but have you come to Christ to be healed? Have you really come for that purpose? Alas! Some come even to God's house only to see, or to be seen; how can such people expect to receive a blessing? Yet my Master is so gracious that, often, he is found of them that sought him not. So may it be with any careless ones who are with us now!

16, 17. *And he withdrew himself into the wilderness, and prayed. And it came to pass on a certain day, as he was teaching, that there were Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by, which were come out of every town of Galilee, and Judæa, and Jerusalem: and the power of the Lord was present to heal them.*

These were the least hopeful patients that the great Physician ever had; for to heal these doctors of divinity, and to bring these proud learned Pharisees down to accept the gospel, needed an omnipotent display of divine power. Penitent sinners are readily brought to Christ; but, often, the self-righteous, who think they are rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing, are not to be persuaded to accept the fine gold which Christ presents to all who ask him for it. The Lord grant that, if any such people be here, the power of the Lord may be here to heal them!

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

AN INSTRUCTIVE TRUTH.

A Sermon

PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JULY 21ST, 1904,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Thursday Evening, June 22nd, 1876.

"O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps."—Jeremiah x. 23.

THIS declaration follows after Jeremiah's lamentation over the Lord's ancient people, who were about to be carried away captive into Babylon. The prophet speaks of a fact that was well known to him. It is always well, brethren, to know the truth, and to know it so certainly that you are able to remember it just when you most need it. There are some people, who are very much like that foolish captain of whom we have heard, who had a good anchor, but he left it at home when he went to sea, so it was no use to him. So, these people know what would comfort them, but they do not recollect it in the time of their distress. Jeremiah says, "O Lord, I know," and he utilizes his knowledge as a source of comfort in his hour of need.

What Jeremiah knew was this,—that the affairs of this world are not under the control of men, however much they may imagine that they are. There is a supreme authority to theirs, and a power which rules, and overrules, and works according to its own beneficent will, whatever men may desire or determine to do. Nebuchadnezzar was about to carry the Jews away from the land which flowed with milk and honey to his own far distant country; but the prophet consoled himself with the reflection that, whatever Nebuchadnezzar meant to do, he was only the instrument in the hands of God for the accomplishment of the divine purpose. He proposed, but God disposed. The tyrant of Babylon thought that he was working out his own will, yet he was really carrying out the will of God in chastising the idolatrous and rebellious nation. This was Jeremiah's consolation, "I do not know what Nebuchadnezzar may do; but I do know that 'the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.' I know that, in God's eternal purposes, every step of Judah's way is mapped out, and he will

make it all work for his own glory and the good of his chosen people in the end."

Child of God, will you, for a moment, reflect upon the overruling power of God even in the case of the most mighty and wicked of men? They sin grossly, and what they do is done of their own free will, and the responsibility for it lies at their own door. That we never can forget, for the free agency of man is a self-evident truth; but, at the same time, God is omnipotent, and he is still working out his wise designs, as he did of old, in the whirlwind of human wrath, in the tempest of human sin, and even in the dark mines of human ambition and tyranny, all the while displaying his sovereign will among men even as the potter forms the vessels on the wheel according to his own will.

This truth ought to be remembered by us, because it tends to take from us all fear of man. Why shouldst thou, O believer, be afraid of a man that shall die, or the son of man, who is but a worm? Thou art, as a child of God, under divine protection; so, who is he that shall harm thee while thou art a follower of that which is good? Remember that ancient promise, "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord." The most powerful enemy of the Church can do nothing without God's permission. He can put a bit into the mouth of leviathan, and do with him as he pleaseth. The almighty God is Master and Lord even over the men who imagine that all power is in their hands.

And while this truth should banish our fear of man, it should also ensure our submission to the will of God. Suppose that the Lord allows Nebuchadnezzar to devastate the land that he gave to his people by covenant; it is God who permits it, therefore think not thou so much of the instrument employed by him as of the hand in which that instrument is held. Art thou afflicted, poor soul, by some hard unkind spirit? Remember that God permits thee to be so tried, and be not angry with that which is only the second cause of thy trouble, but believe that the Lord permits this to happen to thee for thy good, and therefore submit thyself to him. A dog, when he is struck with a stick, usually bites the stick; if he had more sense, he would try to bite the man who holds the stick. So, your contention must not be against the instrument of your affliction. If there be any contention, it is really against God; and you would not, I trust, think of contending with your Maker. Rather, say, "It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good." Let your back be bared to the rod, and look up into your Heavenly Father's face, and say, "Show me wherefore thou contendest with me."

This truth ought also to strengthen our faith. When fear goes, faith comes in. It is an easy matter to trust God when everything goes smoothly; but genuine faith trusts God in a storm. When the land of Judah was hedged about by God's providence, and no enemy ventured to set foot upon the sacred soil, it was easy for a prophet to praise the Lord; but it was quite another matter to trust God

when Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the villages, besieged the cities, and, by-and-by, took them, and gave them up to utter destruction, and carried away their inhabitants into captivity. To trust in God then, was not so easy; yet that was the time for the display of real faith. Faith in the storm is true faith; faith in a calm may be, or may not be, genuine faith. Summer-weather faith may be true, or may not be true; but wintry faith, that can bring forth fruit when the snows are deep, and the North wind blows, is the faith of God's elect. It proves that it has divine vitality in it, because it can master the circumstances which would have utterly crushed the faith which appertains only to flesh and blood. It is a severe trial, to a child of God, when he is mocked at home,—when someone, who ought to be kind to him, is quite the opposite,—when the ties of nature seem only to intensify the hatred that is felt against the heir of grace,—when Ishmael mocks Isaac, and grieves him continually. That is a severe trial, but it affords the opportunity for the tried one to recall this truth, that God has all things in his hand, and that this trial is only permitted, in his wisdom and love, for some good purpose towards his own child. It is still true that "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose;" and that "no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." If your enemy triumphs over you for a time, you should say to him, "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise." May the Holy Spirit help you so to do! The way of the persecutor is, after all, not left absolutely to his own will, but there is another and a higher will that overrules all.

We will not, however, tarry longer over the consideration of the context so far as it applies to Nebuchadnezzar, and other adversaries of the people of God, but we will endeavour to learn the lesson that is taught us in the latter clause of the text: "It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." And, firstly, I will try to prove to you that *these words are true;* and, secondly, that *these words are instructive.*

I. First, then, THESE WORDS ARE TRUE: "It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps."

For, first, although man is an active individual, so that he can walk, he cannot direct his steps, *because there may be some obstacle in his way which he cannot surmount, and which will change the whole course of his life.* He may have determined, in his own mind, that he will do this or that, and that he will go here or there; but he cannot foresee every circumstance that may happen to him, and there may be circumstances that will entirely alter the direction of his life; there may be unexpected difficulties, or what many call accidents, which are really providences, which will prevent us from doing what we have resolved to do. Take the case of a young man, who is just beginning business life; though he is active and strong, is it in him to direct his steps? I know it was not in me to direct my own steps. I had certain plans concerning my life course, but they have not been fulfilled. No doubt, the highest desire I ever cherished has been granted to me; but my first plans and purposes were not

realized. I am not, to-day, where I hoped to have been; there were difficulties in the way, which made it impossible for me to get there. I expect others have had a similar experience. A young man may try to choose his path in life, but we all know how seldom, if ever, he can get exactly what he wants. Perhaps he goes into a certain house of business, and he says, "I shall work my way up till I get to the top." Yet, how frequently it happens that something occurs, which jerks him off the line of rails which he had laid down for himself, and he has to go in quite a different direction. The path he had chosen was, apparently, a very proper one for him to choose; perhaps, he spent a good deal of earnest thought upon the matter, and, possibly, also a good deal of prayer; yet he finds, as many others have found, that "it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." It is possible that the young man prospers so that he is able to go into business on his own account; but the same lesson has to be learned under different circumstances. He could not foresee what was going to happen, so he had purchased certain goods, relying upon an expected rise in the market; but there was a sudden fall, instead of a rise, and he became a loser, not a gainer. Going into business is often like going to sea; one may be much tossed about, and possibly may be wrecked, before reaching the desired haven. Many a man has found that he cannot get what he most confidently reckons upon.

Another man fails in health. He might have prospered; but, just when the full vigour of his physical strength was needed, and the greatest clearness of his mental vision was required, he was laid aside. As he sickened, he also became depressed in spirit, as he realized that his path must be that of an invalid, and perhaps of a poor man; yet he thought his career would have been that of a strong man, who would soon have reached a competence. I am sure that I must be addressing many, who know very well, from their own experience, that it is not of the slightest use for a man to say, "I will do this," or "I will do that," because something or other may occur, which will altogether prevent you from doing that which seems simple enough now. The mariner reckons on reaching port at a certain day or hour, but the wind may shift, or many things may happen to delay him. The mariner, however, can reckon even better than you can, for he has his chart, and he can find his way; he knows where the shoals are, and the quicksands, and the rocks, and where the deep channels run; but you do not know anything about your future life; you are sailing over a sea that no ship's keel has ever ploughed before. God knows all about it; everything is present to his all-seeing eye, but it is not present to your eye. It is not possible for a man to direct his own way absolutely, for he has not the power to do it; let him strive and struggle as he may, he must often be made to feel this.

Perhaps some of you are just now in this condition. Your affairs have got into a tangle, and you do not at all know how to unravel it. You are like a man in a maze or a labyrinth. You wish to take the course which is according to the will of God; but, whether you should turn to the right hand or to the left, you do not know.

Now, you have begun to realize what was always true, but what you did not perceive before, that is, that "it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." You cannot direct your own way; you are quite perplexed as to which of two courses you should take. If this one be taken, it involves one form of trouble; and if the other course be chosen, that involves another kind of difficulty. What are you to do? Well, you know that the wisest thing for you to do is to take the matter to the Lord, and ask him to direct you. That is what you ought to do in every case; that ought to be the constant habit of your soul,—to look for the fiery-cloudy pillar which alone can guide you safely over the trackless wastes of life.

In the second place, man ought not to direct his way according to his own will, because *his will is naturally evil*. Ungodly men think that they can direct their own way. Ah, sirs! if you do that, you will direct your way down to the deeps of destruction. He who is his own guide is guided by a fool. He that trusteth to his own understanding proves that he has no understanding. If you will be your own director, you will be directed to the place where you will have bitter cause to rue it for ever and ever. If a man, starting out in life, says, "I shall follow my own will. I will say to my passions, 'You shall be indulged;' and to my desires, 'Eat, drink, and be merry;' and to my soul, 'Trouble not thyself with solemn and serious things; leave eternity till it comes, and make thou the best thou canst of time:' I will direct my own way as pleasure shall guide me, or as self-interest shall guide me,"—if you, sir, talk like that, I pray you to remember that "it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps;" and it ought not to be, for man is quite incompetent to perform such a task as that, because he has a natural bias towards that which is evil,—an inclination towards that which will be injurious to him, and to others also, and which will make him miss the chief end of his being, which is, to glorify God, and to enjoy him for ever.

I should like, before proceeding further with my subject, to urge everyone, who has hitherto depended upon himself, to pause, and lift up his heart to heaven, and say, "Gracious Spirit, thou shalt be my Guide, from this time, and for ever." For, young man, young woman, you will surely run upon the rocks, ere long, if you take the tiller of your life's vessel into your own hands. With such a heart as yours, you cannot expect to go right without the grace of God. The doctrine of the depravity of the human race, is not merely an article in the creed; it is a matter of everyday experience. There is in you, by nature, a tendency to put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter,—to put darkness for light, and light for darkness; and though you may think that you have a preference for good,—and it is possible that you have a preference for some forms of good,—yet there are critical points where self seeks to rule, where the weakness of your natural disposition will be discovered, sooner or later, and where the evil that lurks within your flesh will prove to be your ruin. I charge you, sons and daughters of Adam, to remember that, since your father, Adam, even in his state of innocence, could not direct his own way aright, but lost paradise

for us all, there is no hope that, in your fallen state, you can find your way back to paradise. Nay, but you will keep on wandering further, and further, and further from the way of peace and holiness, for "it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps."

Let me give another meaning to the text, and still seek to prove it at the same time. It is not, and it ought not to be in man that walketh to direct his steps, because, not only is he naturally inclined to evil, but *even when grace has renewed his nature, his judgment is so fallible that it is a great mistake for him to attempt to direct his own way.* Dear brother or sister in Christ, the stony heart of unbelief has been removed from you, and you have had a new heart and a right spirit put within you; and, now, the living and incorruptible seed that is in you makes you seek after that which is good and right; but if you, even now, shall trust to your own judgment, you will find yourself brought into a thousand sorrows. Ah, my brother, you are an experienced Christian man, and others look up to you, and ask direction from you; but if you are really experienced, you will often say to them, "God helping me, I can direct you; but, as for myself, I feel that I have need of a director quite as much as the youngest babe in the family of God." Does not every man, who is truly wise, feel himself to be increasingly a fool apart from divine guidance, and is it not a token of growth in wisdom and grace when a man's self-confidence continues to grow less and less? Distrust yourself, dear friend, for you accurately gauge your own judgment when you do that. It is about little matters that wise men generally make their grosser mistakes. In what he considers a difficult matter, the wise Christian man always has resort to God in prayer; but when he gets what he regards as a very simple thing, which is perfectly clear, and which he thinks he can himself decide; then his folly is speedily discovered. He is like the Israelites were with the Gibeonites; they said, in effect, if not in words, "We do not need to pray about this matter. We must not make treaties with the Canaanites, but these men are not Canaanites, that is quite clear. We heard them say that they had come from a far country, and when we looked at their shoes we knew that they spoke the truth. They told us that they were quite new when they put them on, yet now they are old and clouted; they must have come a great many miles, you may depend upon it. And their bread—did you notice that? It has the blue mould all over it; we should not like to eat a mouthful of it, yet they told us that it was quite new when they started. There is no doubt that they are distinguished foreigners, who have come from a far country, so let us strike hands with them, and make a covenant with them." And so they did, for the case seemed so clear to them that they asked no counsel of God; and therein Israel made a great mistake. So, brothers and sisters, whenever any case appears to be very clear to you, be sure then to say, "Let us pray about it." You know the old proverb, "When it is fine weather, carry an umbrella. When it is wet, you can do as you like." So, when any case seems to be quite clear, pray over it. When it is more difficult, I dare not say that you may do as you like about praying then, unless I say it in

the spirit of the proverb, which would imply that you would be sure to pray then. When you feel certain that you cannot go wrong, you certainly will go wrong unless you ask counsel of God about the matter. That was a good plan of the old Scotchman, who, when anything was in dispute, used to say, "Reach down yon Bible;" and when that was brought down, and the Scripture read, and prayer offered, the good man felt that he could see his way, and could go with firm step along the path to which the Lord had directed him. "It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps," for his judgment is fallible.

I think there is another meaning to be given to the text, for the gracious man feels that he must not direct his own steps, *because he cannot take even a step in the right way apart from divine help.* How can he talk about directing his own steps when he is absolutely dependent upon the grace of God for every step he takes? O brothers and sisters, if the Lord were to help us, by his grace, until we got up to the doorstep of heaven, we should never be able to get in unless he gave us the grace to take the last step! You cannot direct your own steps, for you are a cripple, and cannot take even one step except as strength is given you from on high. You are like a ship upon the sea; you can make no progress except as the breath of the Divine Spirit fills the sails of your barque. How can you direct your own way when you have no power to go in it, and are dependent upon God for everything? I pray you to confess your dependence, and not to talk of directing your own steps.

I must give you just one thought more under this head. *He that walketh need not think of directing his own steps, for there is One who will direct them for him.* What if sin inclines us to take the wrong path, and if a feeble judgment makes us err through inadvertence? There is no need for us to choose our own lot; but we may bow before the Lord, and say, "Thou shalt choose our inheritance for us." The choice is difficult for you, my brother; then do not choose your own way, but leave it to him who seeth the end from the beginning, and who is sure to make a wise choice. The burden of life is heavy, my sister, then do not try to carry it, but "cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee." "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass." Let it not be your choice, but let it be God's choice. That was a wise answer of a good old Christian woman, when she was asked whether she would choose to live or die. She said that she had no choice in the matter, but that she left it with the Lord. "But," said one, "suppose the Lord put it to your choice, which would you select?" "Neither," she replied; "I would ask him not to let me choose, but to choose for me so that it should be as he willed, not as I willed." Oh, if we could but once abandon our own choosings, and say to the Lord, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt," how much more happy we might be! We should not be troubled by the thought that we could not direct our own steps, but we should be glad of it, because our very weakness would entitle us to cry unto the Lord, "Now that I cannot direct my own way, what I know not teach thou me."

II. Time fails me, and therefore I will close my discourse by briefly mentioning the practical lessons of the text in order to prove to you that THESE WORDS ARE INSTRUCTIVE. It seems to me that they are instructive if we use them thus.

First, *avoid all positive resolutions about what you mean to do*, remembering that "it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." Do not forget what the apostle James says about this matter, "Go to now, ye that say, To-day or to-morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain, whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow." If you do make any plans, always make them in pencil, and have your indiarubber handy, so that you can rub them out quickly. Much mischief comes of making them in ink, and regarding them as permanent, and saying, "This is what I am sure I shall do." Cast iron breaks easily, so do not have any cast-iron regulations for your life. Do not say, "That is my plan, and I shall keep to it whatever happens." Be ready to alter your plan as God's providence indicates that alteration would be right. I have known people who have been very much given to change; I cannot commend them, for I remember that Solomon said, "As a bird that wandereth from her nest, so is a man that wandereth from his place." So, do not be in a hurry to wander. On the other hand, I have known some persons, who have resolved that they will never move at all. Do not make such a resolution as that, but recollect that, although "a rolling stone gathers no moss," it is equally true that "a sitting hen gets no barley;" and believe that there may come a time when it will be right for you to move. Do not make up your mind either that you will move, or that you will not move, but wait for guidance from God as to what he would have you do.

The next thing is, *never be too sanguine in your expectations.* I suppose we must have expectations; that old-fashioned benediction, "Blessed are they that expect nothing, for they shall not be disappointed," is very difficult to gain. Expect that, if God has promised you anything, he will be true to his word; but, beyond that, do not expect anything beneath the moon; for, if you do, you will be sure to be disappointed sooner or later. It is of the man whose heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord, that it is said, "He shall not be afraid of evil tidings;" but if his heart had been fixed merely on the attainment of certain worldly ends, he would have been overwhelmed when the evil tidings came. As to anything in this world, let this be the rule by which you are governed, "Having food and raiment, be therewith content," and never cherish too sanguine expectations.

Next, *avoid all security as to the present.* If you have anything that you prize very highly, hold it very loosely, for you may easily lose it. Read the word "mortal" plainly imprinted on the brows of all your children. Look into the dear eyes that are to you like wells in the desert, and remember that they may be closed in less than an hour, and the light of life be gone from them. Your beloved one and you yourself are alike mortal, and either of you may soon be taken from the other. Have you property? Remember that wealth

has wings, and that it flies away, like a bird upon swift pinions. Have you health? Then think what a marvellous mercy it is that—

"A harp of thousand strings
Should keep in tune so long;"—

and remember that, very soon, those strings may be all jarring, and some of them may be broken. Hold everything earthly with a loose hand; but grasp eternal things with a death-like grip. Grasp Christ in the power of the Spirit; grasp God, who is your everlasting portion, and your unfailing joy. As for other things, hold them as though you held them not, even as Paul says, "It remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; . . . and they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away." Of everything below, it is wise for us to say, "This is not my abiding portion." It is very necessary to say this, and to realize that it is true, for everything here is covered with bird-lime, and the birds of paradise get stuck to it unless they are very watchful. Mind what you are doing, you prosperous people, you who have nice homes, you who are investing your money in the funds; mind that you do not get bird-limed. There is nothing permanently for you here, after all. Your home is in heaven; your home is not here; and if you find your treasure here, your heart will be here also; but it must not be so. You must keep all earthly treasures out of your heart, and let Christ be your treasure, and let him have your heart.

The next observation I would make is this,—*Bow before the divine will in everything.* "It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." Why should it be? O Lord, thou art Master, thou art King; then why should we wish to have our own way? Is it right that the servant should take the master's place? There are some of you who are in trouble, and probably your chief trouble arises from the fact that you will not absolutely submit to the Lord's will. I pray that the Holy Spirit may enable you to do so, for trouble loses all its sting when the troubled one yields to God. If you had directed your own way, and this trouble had come upon you because of the choice that you had made, you might have cause to be distressed; but as the Lord has so directed and arranged your affairs, why should you be cast down? My dear friend, you know—or, at any rate, you ought to know—that you cannot be supreme; you must be content to be second. You must say to the Lord, "Thy will, not mine, be done." You will have to say it sooner or later; and if you are a child of God, you ought to have said it long ago, so say it at once. I heard one who, I thought, was a Christian, say, "I cannot think that God was right in taking away my dear mother from me." I replied, "My sister, you must not talk like that." Perhaps someone else says, "I did feel that it was hard when my dear child was taken from me." Yes, my dear friend, you may have felt that it was hard, but you ought to have felt that it was right. God must be free to do as he pleases, and he always does what is right; therefore, you must submit to his will, whatever he pleases to do.

My last observation is,—*Pray about everything.* Remember what Paul wrote to the Philippians, "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." Pray about everything; I make no exception to this. Pray about waking in the morning, and pray about falling asleep at night. Pray about any great event in your life, but pray equally about what you call the minor events. Pray as Jacob did when he crossed the brook Jabbok; but do not forget to pray when there is no angry Esau near, and no special danger to fear. The simplest thing, that is not prayed over, may have more evil in it than what appears to be the direst evil when once it has been brought to God in prayer. I pray that all of you, who love the Lord, may commit yourselves afresh to Christ this very hour. I wish to do so myself, saying, "My Master, here am I; take me, and do as thou wilt with me. Use me for thy glory in any way that thou pleasest. Deprive me of every comfort, if so I shall the more be able to honour thee. Let my choicest treasures be surrendered if thy sovereign will shall so ordain." Let every child of God make a complete surrender here and now, and ask for grace to stand to it. Your greatest sorrow will come when you begin to be untrue to your full surrender to the Lord; so may you never prove untrue to it!

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

JEREMIAH X.

Verses 1, 2. *Hear ye the word which the* LORD *speaketh unto you, O house of Israel: Thus saith the* LORD, *Learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them.*

Among the heathen, if certain stars were in conjunction, it was considered unlucky; and certain days of the week were also regarded as unlucky, just as to this day, there are people who think that it is very unfortunate to commence anything on a Friday. There are a great many foolish superstitions floating about this silly world, but you Christian people should never allow such follies to have any influence upon you. Neither the fiends of hell, nor the stars of heaven, can ever injure those who put their trust in God.

3, 4. *For the customs of the people are vain: for one cutteth a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the axe. They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it move not.*

Those ancient prophets seemed to take delight in heaping scorn upon the god-making of the heathen. Even the heathen poets made sport of the god-making; one of them very wisely said that it would be more reasonable to worship the workmen who made the god, than to worship the god which the workmen had made.

5. *They are upright as the palm tree, but speak not: they must needs be borne, because they cannot go.*

Pretty gods they must be, cannot move, and cannot even stand till they are nailed up, and cannot stir unless they are carried from place to place.

5–8. *Be not afraid of them; for they cannot do evil, neither also is it in them to do good. Forasmuch as there is none like unto thee, O* LORD; *thou art great, and thy name is great in might. Who would not fear thee, O King of*

nations? for to thee doth it appertain: forasmuch as among all the wise men of the nations, and in all their kingdoms, there is none like unto thee. But they are altogether brutish and foolish: the stock is a doctrine of vanities.

To teach people to worship mere stocks and stones, may well be called "a doctrine of vanities."

9. *Silver spread into plates is brought from Tarshish, and gold from Uphaz, the work of the workman, and of the hands of the founder: blue and purple is their clothing: they are all the work of cunning men.*

Step into any Roman Catholic Joss-house in England, or on the Continent; or, for the matter of that, into any Anglican Joss-house, for they are all very much alike; and you will see that the modern "gods" are no better than those upon which the prophets of old poured scorn; and I think it is our duty to pour scorn upon these saints, and saintesses, and Madonnas, and Bambinos, and I know not what besides.

10—13. *But the LORD is the true God, he is the living God, and an everlasting king: at his wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide his indignation. Thus shall ye say unto them, The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens. He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heavens by his discretion. When he uttereth his voice, there is a multitude of waters in the heavens, and he causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth; he maketh lightnings with rain, and bringeth forth the wind out of his treasures.*

To what a height of sacred imagery does Jeremiah mount! He seems to shake off his usual melancholy spirit when he comes to sing the praises of the Lord. He uses very similiar language to that of Job, his fellow-sufferer.

14. *Every man is brutish in his knowledge:*

Every idolater proves that he knows no more than a brute beast when he worships a stock or a stone.

14, 15. *Every founder is confounded by the graven image: for his molten image is falsehood, and there is no breath in them. They are vanity, and the work of errors: in the time of their visitation they shall perish.*

The next verse brings out very vividly the contrast between these false gods and the one living and true God:—

16. *The portion of Jacob is not like them: for he is the former of all things; and Israel is the rod of his inheritance: The LORD of hosts is his name.*

What a blessed name that is for God: "The portion of Jacob"! And the other side of the truth is equally blessed: "Israel is the rod of his inheritance." God belongs to his people, and they belong to him; if we can but realize that these blessings are ours, we are building on the solid foundation of the richest possible happiness.

The form of the prophecy now changes; for God was about to send his people, because of their sin, into a long and sad captivity; so the prophet says, in the name of the Lord:—

17, 18. *Gather up thy wares out of the land, O inhabitant of the fortress. For thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will sling out the inhabitants of the land at this once, and will distress them, that they may find it so.*

They had fled to their fortresses for shelter, for the Babylonians were coming up against them; but no hope of deliverance was held out to them, and they were told to pack up their little bundles, to put their small stores as closely together as they could, for they had to go away into a far distant country as captives of the mighty king Nebuchadnezzar. God compares their captivity to the forcible ejection of stones from a sling: "I will sling

out the inhabitants of the land at this once." How severely God chastened his people in Jeremiah's day! Yet, when we think of their innumerable provocations, and of how they revolted again and again against the Lord, we are not surprised that at last, the Lord sent them into captivity.

Now listen to Jeremiah's lamentation over the people whom he looks upon as already in captivity; he speaks in the name of the nation, and says:—

19. *Woe is me for my hurt! my wound is grievous: but I said, Truly this is a grief, and I must bear it.*

Ah, child of God, you also must learn to say that! There are some trials and troubles, which come upon you, against which you may not contend, but you must say, "Truly this is a grief, and I must bear it."

20. *My tabernacle is spoiled, and all my cords are broken: my children are gone forth of me, and they are not: there is none to stretch forth my tent any more, and to set up my curtains.*

Alas, poor Israel! she was like a tent removed, with none to set her up again. There are some churches, in the present day, that are in this sad condition; the faithful fail from among them, there are no new converts, and no earnest spirits, so that the church has to say, "My tent is spoiled, and all my cords are broken: my children are gone forth of me, and they are not: there is none to stretch forth my tent any more, and to set up my curtains" Yes, poor afflicted church, that may be all true, yet thy God can visit thee, and make the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children; and thou, who hast lost thy dearest ones, and seemest now to have no stay left,—thy children are all taken from thee, but thy God can build thee up; is he not better to thee than ten sons; and has he not said to thee, "Thy Maker is thy Husband; the Lord of hosts is his name"?

21, 22. *For the pastors are become brutish, and have not sought the LORD: therefore they shall not prosper, and all their flocks shall be scattered. Behold, the noise of the bruit is come,—*

"Bruit" is an old Norman word; one wonders how it got in here. It might be rendered, "The noise of the *tumult* is come,"—

22—24. *And a great commotion out of the north country, to make the cities of Judah desolate, and a den of dragons. O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps. O LORD, correct me, but with judgment; not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing.*

What a suitable prayer this is for a sick man, for a tried believer, for the child of God in deep despondency of soul; I scarcely know any better words that any of us could use. The suppliant does not ask to go unchastised, but he says, "O Lord, correct me, but with judgment: not in thine anger; lest thou bring me to nothing."

25. *Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that call not on thy name: for they have eaten up Jacob, and devoured him, and consumed him, and have made his habitation desolate.*

So he asks God, instead of smiting his own children, to smite his enemies; and knowing what we do about the Babylonians, we do not wonder that Jeremiah put up such a prayer as that.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—215, 208.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE SINNER'S ONLY ALTERNATIVE.

A Sermon

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DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On a Lord's-day Evening, during the winter of 1861—2.

"Now therefore come, and let us fall unto the host of the Syrians: if they save us alive, we shall live; and if they kill us, we shall but die."—2 Kings vii. 4.

OUTSIDE the gates of Samaria, at the time mentioned in our text, you might have seen four miserable beings, gaunt and thin, with that sharpness of eye and visage which is ever the effect of protracted hunger. They were lepers, suffering from a loathsome disease, and emaciated by privation. They held, as it were, a miniature council of war, and the result of their deliberations was that they said one to another, "Why stay we here to die? If we go into the city, even should we be permitted to remain there, famine is so rife that we should soon die there; while, if we continue to sit here, it is quite certain that we must pine away, and perish. Let us go to the camp of the Syrians; there is a little hope in that direction, though it may be a very slender one. The Syrians may put us to death, and so end our miseries. Perhaps death by the sword is preferable to death by famine; at any rate, we can but die in any case. Let us choose the desperate alternative; let us take that course which, although it requires the greatest boldness, holds out some slight hope of success."

You know the result of their decision; they went to the Syrian camp, found that the host had fled, feasted themselves to the full, and, possibly, began to appropriate some of the plunder that abounded all around them. Then, suddenly, the thought struck them, "Here we have bread and corn in abundance, yet the people in Samaria are starving. This is a time of common distress; so, though they did thrust us out of the city, it would be a deed unworthy even of lepers if we left our fellow-creatures without news of our discovery; so, let us go back, and tell the good news to the people in the city, that their sufferings may be relieved, as our own have been." They did so, and soon the famished crowds

poured out of Samaria, and fed to the full. You are familiar with the narrative, so I will base upon it an argument which may prove useful to any enquiring ones who may be here. There are, probably, with us some who have before them an alternative somewhat similar to the one mentioned in our text. If so, I hope they will imitate these poor lepers in their actions; and, afterwards, count it their joyful privilege to deliver to others a message as cheering as the one which these lepers carried to the famine-stricken people of Samaria.

I. First, then, THERE ARE SOME OF YOU WHO HAVE AN ALTERNATIVE PRESENTED TO YOUR CONSCIENCES.

There was a time when you were careless about eternal things, but that time has passed. You can look back, possibly, for only a few weeks, to the time when the Sabbath was to you a day of revelry, when the house of God was entirely neglected by you, when the Bible was a Book which you would not have read unless you had been flogged to it, and when prayer was a duty and privilege that you utterly despised. But, now, your conscience has been somewhat awakened, and though not thoroughly as yet, still partially you begin to perceive that what is written in Scripture is true, that we have gone astray like lost sheep, that our iniquities have prevailed against us, and that our very righteousnesses are as filthy rags. You have heard the gospel preached; it matters not where,—whether in the cathedral, or in the theatre, or anywhere else. But, now that you have listened to the Word, Satan has interposed, and has said to you, "Christ will not receive such sinners as you are. The grace of God was never intended for men who have degraded themselves as you have. There may be hope for other men, but there is none for you; the gate of mercy is fast closed against you, and it has been said of you, 'He that is filthy, let him be filthy still; he has disobeyed his God, let him receive the penalty for that disobedience.'"

Now you perceive that there are just two courses open to you; you can sit still, but then you know that you must perish; or you can go to Christ, and your fear is that you will perish then. Yet you can but die if you go to him, and he rejects you; whereas, if you do not go to him, you must surely perish. Even should you believe in him, you fear that you may be lost; but if you do not believe in him, there is no hope at all for you. Should you go to him in prayer, your fears tell you that he may repel you, and say to you, "Get you gone; what right have you, who once cursed me, to expect any favour from me? You, who have scorned my grace a hundred times, and defied my law, what do you mean by falling upon your knees, and entreating my mercy? Begone, ungrateful wretch, and perish in thy sins!" Yet still this truth is present to your mind,—that, if you do perish there, you do but perish, and it is quite certain that you must perish if you remain where you are. Let me try and work out this question for you, sitting down by your side, as one of the leprous men may have sat down by his fellow. You know, my friend and brother, that, should you die as you now are, it is absolutely certain that you must perish. Do not listen to Satan's lie: "You shall not surely perish." You all

know that the Bible is the Book of God. I can hardly believe any man who tells me that he doubts whether the Bible is the Word of God. The truth of Scripture is being so perpetually confirmed by all the discoveries of those who travel in the land where it was written that I can scarcely credit the doubts concerning its authenticity as being honest.

But even if you reject the Word of God, you must believe that God is just. If there be a God, he must punish men for sinning against him. How can any moral government exist if sin goes unpunished, if virtue and vice lead to the same end? Conscience, fallen though it is, and no longer like God's candle in the soul, still hath sufficient light left to assure men that God must punish sin. Supposing that you do accept the Word of God as true, you know that the unregenerate can never see the face of God with acceptance, that those who have not been cleansed from sin can never stand before the thrice-holy Jehovah, for there can by no means enter heaven anything that defileth. As to your ultimate fate, if you continue as you now are, there can be no question, the fire of hell must be your everlasting portion. Now turn to the other alternative; there is for you at least some hope. Even your poor trembling heart admits that there is at least some hope that, if you seek mercy, you shall find it. I can assure you that there is not only hope, but that there is certainty that you will obtain it. Jesus casts out none that come to him, and he freely receives the vilest of the vile. But I put the matter now as your unbelief puts it; it is not to you an absolute certainty that Christ will reject you, is it? You are not quite sure that, if you pray to him, he will reject your petition; or that, if the tear of penitence shall steal down your cheek, God will refuse to pardon you. I am only stating the question as you yourself state it; if I were speaking according to my own convictions, I should, on the authority of God's Word, affirm again and again that, if you come unto him through Jesus Christ, his Son, he will certainly receive you. But even putting it in your way, is it not the wisest course for you to say,—

> "If I perish, I will pray,
> And perish only there"?

Let us look at the matter in another light. It is certain that, if you perish as you now are, you will perish without pity and without mercy. The law, by which you are condemned already, knows nothing about forgiveness, and the law provides no sacrifice for sin. If you perish without seeking mercy at the hands of Christ, there can be no mercy for you; but rigorous, unabated, undiluted justice must be your portion. But now, do you not feel that, even if you could perish after coming to God through Christ, yet you would not perish without having some ray of pity thrown upon you? Would there not be at least this consolation for you,—"I did what God commanded me to do; I did come to him, and seek forgiveness; I did plead the precious blood of Christ, yet he rejected me"? Do you not think that this would be balm to your spirit? But if you perish as you now are, you will have

this thought ringing in your ears for ever,—"You heard of Christ, but you believed not on him; you lived where the light of the gospel was clearly shining, yet you shut your eyes to it; Christ was preached close to you, yet you refused to trust him; you would have none of his warnings, but you put your fingers in your ears, and ran on to destruction." But should you perish after having sought mercy through Christ, you would be able to say, "I did seek it; I did knock, I did pray, I did trust, I did yield my heart to God, yet I perished." If such perishing were possible,—though we know that it is not,—it would be far preferable to perishing without having sought the Saviour in his own appointed way. For your own sake, then, I urge you to choose this alternative, and I ask you to let me take you by the hand, and lead you to him who, with arms outstretched, waits to welcome you, that he may give pardon to the guilty, life to the dead, and salvation to the lost.

Yet further, you ought to remember that all those who have continued in a state of nature have, without exception, perished. Not one, however high in station, however excellent in morality, however profound in learning, however lofty in fame, has ever been able to pass the threshold of heaven except through the blood and merit of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the black list of the unregenerate, there is no exception to their condemnation. But take the other side, and at least we can assure you, from our own case, that even supposing that some perish, though they trust in Christ,—which is not true,—yet there are some who do not. Certainly, there are some who, in this life, receive the pardon of their sins, and know that they have received it, and who, in death, are cheered with the prospect of a glorious immortality. Saul of Tarsus was led to repent of sin, though he said that he was the chief of sinners. Others in his day, who had no more right to mercy than you have, sought and found it; and there are hundreds, yea, I might say thousands, in this Tabernacle now, who could rise, if this were the proper season to do so, and each one say, "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and delivered him out of all his troubles." Well, then, if God has, to your knowledge, saved some who have come to him,—I say that he saves all who come to him through Christ, but I am dealing with the question from your standpoint,—then it would be wise and right for you also to say,—

"I'll to the gracious King approach,
Whose sceptre pardon gives;
Perhaps he may command my touch,
And then the suppliant lives.

"Perhaps he will admit my plea,
Perhaps will hear my prayer;
But if I perish, I will pray,
And perish only there.

"I can but perish if I go;
I am resolved to try;
For if stay away, I know
I must for ever die."

But you can go on to say, in the words of the same gracious writer,—

> "But if I die with mercy sought,
> When I the King have tried,
> This were to die (delightful thought!)
> As sinner never died."

Nay; not one ever died thus. You would be the first who thus perished, so take this alternative; and, as the Holy Ghost has quickened you to make you feel your need of a Saviour, I pray that the same Holy Spirit may lead you, this very hour, to plunge into the stream,—sink or swim,—that, whether you perish or are saved, you may say, "Thy wounds, O Jesus, shall be my hiding-place; thy blood shall cleanse me from all sin; thy righteousness shall be my clothing; thou, and thou alone, shalt be my All-in-all."

II. Now I pass on to observe that THE DISCUSSIONS OF THESE LEPERS ENDED IN ACTION.

I wish this could be said of all of you. How many holy resolutions have been strangled in this house of prayer! How many good thoughts have been murdered in those pews! See if you cannot find their blood upon your own skirts. Many a time, the tear, which betokened the first rising emotion, has been wiped away, and the emotion has gone with it. May it not be so now, but may God grant that, like the lepers, we may put into action what we think over, and what, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, we resolve to do!

And, first, let me remind you that *the action of these lepers was bold.* Cowardice would have sat still, and said, "It is true that we shall perish if we remain here, but we will not go just yet to the Syrian camp; we are very hungry, but we may be able to go without food for another hour;" and thus, only the extreme pinch of privation would have driven them out. The fear of a sword-thrust might have kept them still, but it did not. They said, "We will risk it; we know that it is a desperate experiment; but, for better or for worse, for life or for death, we will go to the camp of the Syrians." So they said, and so they did, and you will be wise if you act in the same fashion. It may seem a very bold thing for you, my unknown but trembling hearer, to think of going to Christ by faith. "Why!" you say, "I have not the presumption to do so after what I have been." Perhaps some of you could tell of immoral conduct, others could speak of the gospel despised, and of privileges neglected, which makes your guilt even more heinous, and you say, "No, we cannot have the face to go to Christ. We are too black, too guilty, too diseased. We cannot cover our sores, we cannot hide the leprosy which gleams in deadly whiteness from our brow. We cannot go, we dare not go." But do you not recollect those lines of Hart's that we so often sing,—

> "Venture on him, venture wholly,
> Let no other trust intrude;
> None but Jesus
> Can do helpless sinners good"?

Oh, yes, do venture on him! Though it seems impossible that God should receive you, he can do what would be impossible to all others. O thou blackest of the black, and vilest of the vile, trust him to pardon thee, for he can do it! It surpasses thy faith, does it? But it is God who has promised to pardon, so judge him not by thyself, measure not his ability by thy rule, fathom not the depths of his grace with thy short-lined plummet. Honour him by believing that even such a sinner as thou art may find grace and pardon, and find them now. I recollect that John Bunyan, in his "Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners," says that there were times when he felt that his sins were so great, and his horror at them was so terrible, that he must go to Christ at all costs. He said, "Though I used sometimes to think of Christ as of one who stood with a pike in his hand to push me back, yet my dire necessities came upon me with such force that I would fain have run upon the very pike sooner than continue to endure my sin." Sinner, venture to run upon the pike, and thou wilt find that there is no sword or pike in Christ's hand; but when thou thinkest that thou art about to run upon the halberts, he will clasp thee in his arms, press thee to his bosom, and say to thee, "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me, for I have redeemed thee."

O sinner, if thou thinkest that my Master is a hard master, if thou thinkest it would be too bold an action on thy part to come unto him, thou dost not really know him! I once thought him to be such an one as myself. For five long years, I thus slandered him, till my heart was driven almost to despair, and I was ready to choose strangling rather than life. I said it could not be that Christ could ever forgive such a sinner as I was; I wrote bitter things against him, as well as against myself, till at last, when I could stand it no longer, I came into his presence with the rope around my neck, prepared to hear my sentence; but I ventured to give one look at him, and oh, what a change that look brought to me! My soul, at this hour, renews its transports at the remembrance of the change that came over my spirit the moment I learned to believe in Jesus. The burden of my sin was gone in an instant. My five years of agony were soon forgotten in the joy of being able to say, "I'm forgiven! I'm forgiven!" Then could I have shouted for joy because the love of God was shed abroad in my heart. Oh, that I could be the means of bringing even one of you to trust my Master as I then trusted him! I am sure, if you would do so, that you would find him so good and gracious that you would say, "The half has never been told." I have never been able to tell the thousandth part of his love. I have tried to tell of his mercy, but how little of it have I been able to set forth! I have made but a poor daub where there ought to have been a fine picture of a Prince, with every virtue shining in his face, and love streaming from his eyes of compassion. Poor troubled soul, come and trust him, even though it may seem to thee to be a bold thing to do. Like the woman who stole a cure, so do thou come behind him, and touch the hem of his garment. As the dog under the table, without leave or licence,

eats the crumbs that fall, so do you. Though you think it is against law, and against reason, still dare to believe in Jesus. He will be better to thee than all thy fears, better even than thy faith, and thou shalt find that thou didst not trust him without a warrant.

But while these lepers did a bold thing, I note that *they did it unanimously*. It is not said that three of them went to the Syrian camp, but that the fourth said, "No, I will not go yet." It is not recorded that two of them said, "When we have a more convenient season, we will go." It was a mercy for them that they were all hungry; for, if they had not been, they would not have gone where food was so abundant. It was also a mercy for them that they were all lepers, or else they might not have dared to go. What a mercy it is for you, sinner, if you know that you are a sinner! What a blessing it is that you have not yet reached that state of mortification which is the prelude of eternal death! You feel as if you were shut out, as these lepers were. I thank God for it, because, now that you seem to be shut out of Israel, it may be that you will begin to go to Israel's God, and find mercy, and help, and hope in him. You will not all go to him to-night; oh, that you would! There will come under our notice,—our faith is in God that it shall be so,—perhaps a dozen, or a score, each of whom will say, "I will venture to trust Christ." "But what are they among so many?" While we bless God that we have so many seals to our ministry, what a sorrowful reflection it is that so many thousands come into this place, and go away unsaved! There are many of you who can say, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved." Is it because the gospel is not preached here? No, that cannot be the reason, for we know that the truth is preached here fully and faithfully; yet we sow much, and reap little, compared with what our hearts desire. Is there anyone here who resolves to sit down, and die? If you do so resolve, do it deliberately; but I pray the Lord to cause you to make the right decision. You will not decide aright unless he chooses for you; but if you will make the wrong choice, do it deliberately, and do it solemnly. I wish you would say it if you really mean it, for then I hope you would soon reverse it:—"I intend to choose the pleasures of this world, and, from this time forward, to live without God, and without Christ." If you talk like that, you may as well add, "and I mean to die, and be damned," for that must follow if you continue in your present course. In that pew where you are, let your damnation warrant be signed and sealed. "No," you say, "not so." But, sirs, you had better make that league with death, and that covenant with hell, rather than remain as some of you are, indifferent and careless. This is the great fault of our church-goers and chapel-goers. When we once get worldlings in to hear a sermon, they listen with attention; and if they are impressed by what they hear, it often happens that the impression is a saving one. But with you who are used to sermon hearing, it is often merely going from one place to another, to listen to this preacher or that, as though the preaching of the gospel was only intended to amuse you. How often you come to hear us, just as you go to see a popular actor,

that you may spend an evening, and be able, when you are asked, "Have you heard So-and-so?" to say, "Oh, yes! I heard him on such-and-such a night." Sirs, do you think we preach merely for this? If you do think so, it proves that you do not know us. Is it such a fine thing to make a display of ourselves before you? Is it such a grand thing to have all your eyes fixed upon us? God knows that I would sooner break stones on the road than be a minister if it were not for the hope of winning souls. I know of no life that has more trouble in it; I know of no occupation that brings more awful despondency of spirit upon a man's mind than my ministry brings upon me; so, if God does not enable me to win souls by it, I pray him to deliver me from it. I would renounce my charge for all it ever brings me in, or all the honour it ever gives me, if it were not that sinners were saved, backsliders reclaimed, and God glorified. I do pray you, sirs, to shake off your indifference. Be honest even with the devil. If you mean to serve him, be prepared to take his pay; if you enjoy the pleasures of sin, be honest enough to let Satan have a reversionary interest in your soul, and look forward to making your bed in hell, be prepared to lie down in everlasting torments; or else, I conjure you, by the love of God, before whom I stand, embrace that other alternative, and fly to him who will in no wise cast you out.

Bear with me while I again remind you that *the action of the lepers was also instantaneous.* They said, "We will go to the camp of the Syrians," and at once they went. Too many are like that son who said, "I go, sir," and went not. All of us, who are now believers, can recollect times, before our conversion, when we were impressed under solemn sermons, yet the impression soon passed off. Some of you can also remember how you made haste home from the service, and hurried upstairs, for quiet meditation and prayer; but the idle conversation of the afternoon dissipated the impression that had been made. Many there are, who have felt serious searchings of heart under a sermon, and who have said, "Please God to spare us another day, and we will think over these things;" but what do they say concerning them now? There is a grey-headed man over yonder; let him go back in thought to his early days. When he was a little boy, his mother had bright hopes concerning him; and when he was a lad, everybody looked upon him as a young Timothy; but, now, he is more like Demas, and his silvery hair is a reminder of the silver and gold which he obtained by forsaking God, and loving this present evil world; and, all the while, the root of the matter was not in him. Grey-headed man, recall that early vow of thine, which was registered in heaven, but which thou hast broken. There are men here, in the high tide of business, who, when they were much younger, resolved and re-resolved that they would serve the Lord, yet they are still as far from doing so as ever they were. If you wrote down your resolves in your pocket-book, I wish you would read them over again, and read them with repentance as you say, "These vows were made in the power of the flesh; and, therefore, they were broken, but the sin of breaking them remains upon my soul. The lepers went

instantly to the Syrian camp, and so were saved from starvation; and we should go to Christ, not by long-protracted resolving, but by instantaneous submission. As justification by faith is an instantaneous gift, so the faith that saves is, doubtless, an instantaneous act. Believe in Christ, trust Christ, and do it now; for, as soon as you have done that, you are saved.

We will leave this part of the subject when I have just remarked that *these lepers were all well rewarded for what they did.* Not one of them perished of famine; they were all saved. Not one came back empty-handed, but all were greatly enriched. And not one of you, seeking mercy through Christ, shall be refused; but all, who are led by the Spirit to trust Christ, shall be blessed, and saved, and adopted into the family of God.

III. I have no time for the last point except just briefly to refer to the fact that THE LEPERS NO SOONER FOUND WHAT WAS GOOD FOR THEMSELVES THAN THEY WENT TO TELL IT TO OTHERS. And if you have found Christ, after you have rejoiced in him, and fed upon him, and enriched yourself with him as your choicest treasure, then go and tell others all you can about him.

"Oh, but I cannot preach!" says one. Try, brother! "But I cannot preach," you say again, "for I have tried to do so, but failed." Then write a letter, brother; or speak a word for Jesus anyhow.

"Tell it unto sinners, tell,
That you are saved from death and hell."

I cannot make out how some people keep this secret. I cannot keep any secrets, and I am sure that I could not keep this one. No sooner does this secret get into the soul of a man than it tries to burn its way out. You recollect that, when John Bunyan was converted, he said that he wanted to tell the very crows on the ploughed land all about it; and I think it will be the same with you when you find the Lord. If you have learned this great secret, you will want to tell it to your fellow-workmen. Perhaps you are employed behind the counter, so when the shop is shut in the evening, you will be telling this secret to those who are with you in the common room. If you are a husband, you will never be content until you have told it to your wife; or if you are a mother, I am sure you will want to be a preacher to your children. It is a great and holy fire, which will burn, and not smoulder.

There was a spark once got into the stubble, and the Angel of Discretion said to it, "Lie still, spark, lie still; if you begin to burn, the next stalk will catch fire, and then the next, and the next, until the whole field will be ablaze, and then the homestead, and then the village itself will be burned down." But preach as he might, the fire would burn, and the Angel of Discretion well-nigh had his wings burned before he turned to flee. There are, in some of our churches, certain friends who are very angels of prudence. They say, "Young men, do not try to speak for Christ too soon; do not attempt to do it before you are fully qualified for the task." My dear sirs, if God has told any man this secret, he cannot help

telling it to others. If the Lord has touched a man's lips with the live coal from the heavenly altar, his lips will burn as well as the coal. If the new life has been given to him, it must find a way out, so as to convey the blessing to others.

What a mass of men there is constantly attending this place! I suppose that two-thirds of my usual congregation consists of men. What a noble band of men we should have if all were converted to Christ, and then went forth as messengers for Christ to the Church and to the world! Sirs, do you really know Christ, and yet you have not witnessed for him to others? Take care that, before the great tribunal of God, you are not held responsible, through your neglect, for the ruin of your fellow-men. You young men of ability, educated in our grammar schools, and trained in our colleges, it is a lamentable fact that, all too often, if you join the church, you feel as if you had only to give it your name, and not your whole self. If a man joins a rifle corps, he attends drill, and throws himself into the whole affair with heart and soul, endeavouring to promote the interests of the corps in every way that he can; but if he joins a church, it is as much as you can do to get him to drill once a year, and he seems to have nothing to do but to "stand at ease." O sirs, when you join the church, I hope you will give up your whole selves to it! If not, I pray you to withhold your names. Up, up, in the name of God, and tell to starving London what the lepers told to starving Samaria,—that there is bread to be had. Do you say, "I am myself a sinner"? Your once leprous lips will not spoil the message if you have been to Christ, and have trusted in him as your Saviour. Do you say, "I am unworthy"? Ah! but he, who took away your unworthiness, took away the disability which that unworthiness gives. You are not worthy to be called God's son by nature, but by grace you may be worthy to be his ambassador.

My poor friend over there, you often weep because you cannot do more for Christ. Be of good courage, and do all that you can for him. If you cannot speak to thousands, be content to speak to one; and if you cannot bring hundreds to the Saviour, be glad if, now and then, you can bring one mourning soul to him to be comforted. My dear hearers, and especially you who are the members of this church, if you have obtained mercy, I beseech you, in the bowels of Christ, by the compassionate heart of your dying Redeemer, by that hope ye have that he will shortly come again, be instant in season and out of season, preach and teach the truth, knowing that your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord. Oh, that, in the day of Christ's appearing, it may be seen that many sheaves have been brought into the heavenly garner through your being stirred up to labour by the ministry in this house of prayer!

To thee, unpardoned soul, I have spoken at length, and God knows how truly from my heart. Let me speak just this word more ere thou goest home. I am told that, just under the dome of St. Paul's Cathedral, there is the mark of a workman's hammer, where it is said that a man, who was at work on the roof, fell down, and there met with his death. I do not know where it is, but there may be the spot, in this house of prayer, where a soul will be lost for

ever. This may be the moment when the wax upon that soul's death-warrant shall grow cold, because its owner deliberately says, "I will have none of these things;" and when God shall say, "Thou shalt have none of them. I will let thee alone; thy conscience shall never be troubled again, but thou shalt go through life in peace, thou shalt go to thy death without any care, and only in hell shalt thou open thine eyes to thy true condition." God grant that it may not be so with any of you! Yet I feel as if it would be so with you unless sovereign and irresistible grace shall prevent it; and, in that case, there will be a spot, in this house of prayer, where a soul will be born to God. What man will give his heart to Christ? Are there none of you who will do so? Must I go back to my Master with no joyful tidings? Is there no one here who will say,—

"I'll go to Jesus, though my sin
Hath like a mountain rose;
I know his courts, I'll enter in
Whatever may oppose"?

Are there none who will do so? Great God, are all hearts hard? O Spirit of God, come now, in this solemn moment, and break the hearts of stone with the mighty hammer of the Word; cut and wound with thy two-edged sword, and then heal with thy wondrous ointment even now! I say no more, but leave it with him; may it be so, for Jesu's sake! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

PSALM LXXXIV.

May the Spirit of God bless to us every syllable of this familiar Psalm as we read it!

Verses 1, 2. *How amiable are thy tabernacles, O LORD of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.*

Perhaps the psalmist would never have said, "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts!" if he had not been detained from them so long that he could truly say, "My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord." It is very sad, yet it is all too true, that we often need to be deprived of a mercy in order to be made to value it aright. Would it not be wiser, on our part, if we prized our privileges while they were yet spared to us?

Still it is a good thing to have our love to the assemblies of God's house increased by temporary absence from them. See how fervent was the psalmist's desire. His longing turned even to fainting at the very thought that, perhaps, he would never go there again: "My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord." And his very "flesh" also joined in the intense longing of his soul. You cannot often get your flesh to do anything that is good, or to desire anything that is right; yet, sometimes, even our very body seems to be so swayed by the Holy Spirit that it is compelled to go in the right way.

3. *Yea, the sparrow hath found a house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O LORD of hosts, my King, and my God.*

The psalmist envies even the birds that twitter around the sanctuary, and wishes that he, too, had wings that he might fly to God's altar with them, and there take up his permanent abode.

4. *Blessed are they that dwell in thy house:*

The psalmist meant those priests who lived in the temple; and, in a spiritual sense, his words apply to those who dwell in God wherever they are, and who can truly sing,—

"Where'er we dwell, we dwell in thee,
Or on the land or on the sea."

"Blessed are they that dwell in thy house;"—

4. *They will be still praising thee. Selah.*

Constant communion leads to constant adoration.

5. *Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee;—*

Who throws his whole soul into the worship; not such as come up to the house of God, and leave their hearts at home: "Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee;"—

5, 6. *In whose heart are the ways of them.* (Or, better, "are thy ways.") *Who passing through the valley of Baca* (or, "Weeping") *make it a well;*

Finding solace in their suffering, sanctification in their affliction.

6, 7. *The rain also filleth the pools. They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God.*

Blessed are the pilgrims who are journeying to the upper Zion, the Jerusalem which is above, the mother of all the saints. The margin renders it, "They go from company to company;" or it may mean, "They go from strength of faith to greater strength," and so they pass on,—

"Till each appears in heaven at length."

8. *O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer: give ear, O God of Jacob. Selah.*

"Thou art a prayer-hearing God. Didst thou not hear Jacob at the brook Jabbok? Then, O God of Jacob, give ear also to me! If I have not yet come to be like prevailing Israel, I am like wrestling Jacob; so, give ear to me, as thou didst to Jacob."

9. *Behold, O God our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed.*

We hold up Christ before his Father, and say to him,—

"Him, and then the sinner see;
Look through Jesu's wounds on me."

10. *For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand.*

He means, of course, better than a thousand spent anywhere else.

10. *I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.*

"I had rather dust the mats in thy house than sit on Satan's throne; I had rather wash the feet of thy saints, or perform any menial duties for them, than rule over all the hosts in the realms of darkness."

11, 12. *For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly. O LORD of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee.*

He will never walk uprightly unless he does trust in the Lord, neither will he receive the fulness of the blessing except as he learns to trust to the full, for the Master still saith, "According to thy faith, be it unto thee."

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

A BLESSED GOSPEL CHAIN.

A Sermon

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DELIVERED BY

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"Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."—John xiv. 23.

THIS is a blessed chain of gospel experience. Our text is not meant for the men of the world, who have their portion in this life, but for the chosen, and called, and faithful, who are brought into the inner circle of Christ's disciples, and taught to understand the mysteries of his kingdom. It was in answer to the question of Jude as to how Christ would manifest himself to his own, and not to the world, that these words were spoken, and Christ explained that it would be manifest who were his own people by certain marks and signs. They would be those who love him, and keep his commandments, and so win the complacency of the Father; and the Father and the Son would come to these loving and obedient disciples, and make their abode with them. God grant that all of us may be able to take each of the steps here mentioned, so that our Lord may manifest himself to us as he does not unto the world!

The subject upon which I am about to speak to you is one which the preacher cannot handle without the people. I must have God's people with me in spirit to help me while I am dealing with such a topic as this. You know that, in the Church of England service, there are certain places where the clergyman says, "saying after me," so that it is not simply the minister alone uttering the prayer or the confession, but he is a sort of precentor leading the rest of the congregation. In a similar style, I want you people of God, as the Holy Spirit shall enable you, to bend all your thoughts and energies in this direction, and step by step to climb with me to these distinct spiritual platforms,—ascending from the one to the other by the Spirit's gracious aid, that your fellowship may be with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ.

I. Our text begins with the first link in this golden chain, namely, LOVE TO CHRIST: "If a man love me."

This "if" seems to me to stand at the portals of our text, like a sentinel at the gate of a palace, to prevent anybody from entering who ought not to enter. It is an "if" that may be passed round the present assembly, for I fear that all in this house do not love the Lord Jesus Christ. If you cannot answer in the affirmative the question asked by the lips of Jesus himself, "Lovest thou me?" you have nothing to do with the rest of this verse. Indeed, what have you to do with any of the privileges revealed in the Bible, or with any of the blessings promised there, so long as you are without love to Christ? Let that "if" stand, then, as with a drawn sword, like the cherubim at the gate of the garden of Eden, to keep you from venturing to intrude where you have no right to go if you do not love the Lord Jesus Christ: "*If* a man love me."

Art thou a lover of the Lord, dear hearer? Put not that question aside, but answer it honestly, in his sight, for *there are some, who only pretend to love him*, but really do not;—some, who make a loud profession, but their language is hypocritical, for their conduct is not consistent therewith. Do *you* love the Lord Jesus with your whole heart? He is well worthy of your love, so let the question go round the whole assembly, and not miss any one of us, "Lovest thou me?"

For there are some, too, who are *Christ's disciples only by profession.* All they give him is a cold-hearted assent to his teaching. Their head is convinced, and, in a measure, their life is not altogether inconsistent with their profession; but their heart is dead; or, if it be at all alive, it is like that of the church of Laodicea, neither cold nor hot, but lukewarm; and that is a state which Christ abhors. He must occupy the throne of our hearts, and be the best loved of all, or else we lack that which is essential to true Christianity.

"If a man love me," says Christ; so, do you love him? I do not ask whether you love his offices, though I hope you do. You love the Prophet, the Priest, the King, the Shepherd, the Saviour, and whatsoever other title he assumes; each of these names is music to your ear;—but do you love Christ himself? I will not ask whether you love his work, especially the great redemption which comprehends such innumerable blessings. I hope you do; but it is a personal love to Christ that is spoken of here. Jesus says, "If any man love *me*." Have you realized Christ, personally, as still alive, and gone into heaven, and soon to come again in all the glory of his Father and of the holy angels? Say, brother, sister, dost thou love *him?* "If," says Christ, "if a man love me," so it is right and wise for each one of us to put that question to ourselves, even though we know that we can answer it satisfactorily, and say,—

> "Yes, I love thee, and adore;
> Oh, for grace to love thee more!"

And if there should be any doubt about the matter, we ought to put the question, pointedly, again, and again, and again, and let not

ourselves escape till there is a definite answer given one way or another. Heart of mine, dost thou really love the Saviour? Brothers and sisters, put this question to yourselves; and if you do love him, let your love well up like a mighty geyser,—the hot spring that leaps up to a great height. So let the hot spring of your love to Jesus leap up now, and let each one of you say to him,—

> "My Jesus, I love thee, I know thou art mine,
> For thee all the follies of sin I resign;
> My gracious Redeemer, my Saviour art thou,
> If ever I loved thee, my Jesus, 'tis now."

If you can do so, then you may add,—

> "I will love thee in life, I will love thee in death,
> And praise thee as long as thou lendest me breath;
> And say when the death-dew lies cold on my brow,
> If ever I loved thee, my Jesus, 'tis now."

Remember that, *if you do love him, he must have loved you first.* Think of his ancient love,—the love that was fixed upon you or ever the earth was, when he saw you in the glass of futurity, and beheld all that you would be in the ruinous fall of Adam, and by your own personal transgression, and yet loved you, notwithstanding all. Think of him, when the fulness of time was come, stripping himself of all his glory, and descending from the throne of infinite majesty to the manger of humiliation, and being there, as a babe, swaddled in his weakness. Will you not love him who became God incarnate for you? Think of him all through his life,—a life of poverty, for he had not where to lay his head;—a life of rejection, for "he came unto his own, and his own received him not;"—a life of pain, for he bare our sicknesses;—a life of dishonour, for he was despised and rejected of men. Will you further think of him in the garden of Gethsemane? Will not your love be stirred as you watch the bloody sweat, and hear his groans and mark his tears, as he pleads with God until he prevails? Follow him to the judgment-seat, and hear him there charged with sedition and with blasphemy, if you can bear it. Then see the soldiers, as they spit in his face and mock him, while they thrust a reed into his hand for a sceptre, and put on his brow a crown of thorns as his only diadem. See him tied up to be scourged, till the cruel thongs lacerate and tear his precious flesh, and he suffers agonies indescribable. And when you have followed him so far, go further still, and stand at the cross-foot, and mark the crimson stream that flows from his hands, and feet, and side. Stand and watch him when the soldier's spear has pierced his heart, and made the blood and water flow forth for your pardon and cleansing. Did he suffer all this for you, and do you not love him in return? May I not tell that "if" to get out of the way, and let you pass in, that you may take the next step? Track him as he rises from the grave for you, as he ascends to heaven for you, and obtains great gifts for you; and as yonder, before his Father's face, he pleads for you; and as there he governs all things, as King of

kings, and Lord of lords, and governs all for you; as there he prepares many mansions for his own people; and as there he gets ready to come to earth, the second time, that he may receive his people unto himself, that where he is they may be also for ever and for evermore. As you think of all this, love the Lord, ye who are his saints, ye who have been washed in his blood, love him! Ye who are wearing the spotless robe of his righteousness,—love him. Ye who call him "Husband", love him,—ye who are married to him,—united in bonds that can never be severed.

II. If this be true of you, let us pass on to the next point, that of KEEPING CHRIST'S WORDS. "If any man love me," says Christ, "he will keep my words." Let us see how far we have kept his words.

I trust that, first, we keep his words *by treasuring them, and prizing them.* Brothers and sisters, I hope that we venerate every word that Christ has ever uttered. I trust that we desire to treasure up every syllable that he has ever spoken. There is not a word of his, recorded in the Gospels, or in any other of the inspired pages of revelation, by which we do not set more store than by much fine gold.

I trust that we keep Christ's words, next, by *trying to know them.* Are you all diligent students of the Word? Do you search the Scriptures? Do you live upon the truth that the Lord hath spoken? You should do so, for every word that cometh out of his mouth is the true food of your souls. I must ask you whether you are doing these two things. Are you keeping Christ's words by prizing them, and by seeking to be so familiar with them that you know what his words are?

Then, next, do you endeavour to lift the latch, and *to find your way into the inner meaning of his words?* Do you pierce the shell to get at the kernel? Does the Spirit of God lead you into all truth, or are you content with the rudiments of the faith? This is the way to keep Christ's words, namely, by endeavouring, to your very utmost, to understand what the meaning of those words may be.

Then, when you know the meaning of them, *do you seek to keep them in your hearts?* Do you love what Christ has spoken, so that you delight to know what it is, and love it because it is his doctrine? Will you sit at his feet, and receive the instruction that he is willing to impart? Have you attained to that stage that you even love his rebukes? If his words come home to you, and sharply reprove you, do you love them even then, and lay bare your heart before him that you may feel more and more the faithful wounds of this your beloved Friend? Do you also love his precepts? Are they as sweet to you as his promises; or, if you could do as you wish, would you cut them out of the Bible, and get rid of them? O brothers and sisters, it is a blessed proof that grace has been largely given to us when even the smallest word uttered by Jesus Christ is more precious to us than all the diamonds in the world, and we feel that we only want to know what he has said, and to love whatever he has spoken.

"If a man love me, he will keep my words." This declaration of our Lord suggests this question,—*Do we keep his words practically?* That is a most important point, for you will not be able to get any further if you stumble here. Do you endeavour, in

a practical way, to keep all his moral precepts? Are you trying to be, in your lives, as far as you can, like him; or are you selfish unkind, worldly? Are you endeavouring to be like him who hath left you an example that you should follow in his steps? Come, answer honestly. Is this the object of your being? Are you seeking to be moulded by the Holy Spirit in that way? And are you practically keeping Christ's words as to the precepts of the gospel? Have you believed on him? Believing on him, have you been baptized according to his command? Being baptized, do you come to his table, according to his bidding, "This do in remembrance of me"? Or do you turn on your heel, and say that these are non-essential things?

Beloved, if your heart is right with God, you will want to know all his words, and to put them into practice. What care I about the words of any earthly church? They are only the words of men; but search ye, and find the words of Christ; and wherever they lead you, even though you are the only one who has ever been led in that way, follow wherever he leads. You cannot take the next step mentioned in my text unless you can deliberately say, "Yes, Lord, 'thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart; for I am called by thy name, O Lord God of hosts;' and I long to walk in all thy statutes and ordinances, blamelessly, even to the end of my days." You may err; you may make mistakes; you may commit sin; but the intent of your heart must be that, having loved the Lord, you will keep his words in those various senses that I have mentioned.

III. If you have been enabled to pass through these two gates, you may now come to the next one, which tells us of A HIGH PRIVILEGE AND GREAT JOY: "He will keep my words, and *my Father will love him.*"

What wonderful words these are,—"My Father will love him"! It is quite certain that he will do so; for, when a man loves Jesus, he is in sympathy with the Eternal Father himself. You know, my brethren, that the Father's love is fixed upon his only-begotten Son. One with himself in his essential Deity, he has loved him from eternity; but since Jesus has been obedient unto death, "even the death of the cross," we cannot imagine what must be the Father's complacency in the blessed person of our risen and ascended Lord. This is a deep subject, and there is no human mind that can ever fathom the depths of it, and tell how truly and how wonderfully the Father loves his everlasting Son. So, you see, brethren, that, if we love Jesus Christ, our heart meets the heart of God, for the Father also loves him. Have you never felt, when you have been trying to praise Jesus, that you are doing, in your feeble way, just what God has always been doing in his own infinite way? The ever-blessed Spirit is continually glorifying Jesus; and when you are doing the same, God and you, though with very unequal footsteps, are treading the same path, and are in sympathy the one with the other.

Then, besides the fact that you are in sympathy with the Father in having one object of love, you are also in sympathy with him as

to character. Jesus said, "If a man love me, he will keep my words." Well, when you are keeping Christ's words,—when the Divine Spirit is making you obedient to Jesus, and like to Jesus,—you are treading the path where your Heavenly Father would have you walk, and therefore he loves you.

Let me make a clear distinction here. I am not now speaking about the general love of God towards all mankind,—that love of benevolence and beneficence which is displayed even towards the thankless and the evil. Neither am I speaking, just now, concerning the essential love of God towards his own elect, whom he loves, irrespectively of their character, because of his own sovereign choice of them from eternity; but I am speaking of that complacent love which God, as a Father, has towards his own children. You know that you often say to your child, "If you do this or that, your father will love you;" yet you know that a father will love his child, as his child, and always must do so even if his character is not all that the father desires it to be. But what a love that is which a father has to a good, dutiful, obedient child! It is a love of which he talks to him again and again, a love which he manifests to him in many sweet and kindly words, a love which he displays to him in many actions which he would not otherwise have done, bestowing upon him many favours which it would not have been safe to bestow upon him if he had been a naughty, disobedient child. Never forget that our Heavenly Father exercises wise discipline in his house. He has rods for his children who disobey him, and he has smiles for his children who keep his commands. If we walk contrary to him, he has told us that he will walk contrary to us; but if our ways please him, there are many choice favours which he bestows upon us. This teaching is not suggestive of legal bondage, for we are not under law, but under grace; but this is the law of God's house under the rule of grace;—for instance, if a man keeps the Lord's commandments, he will have power with God in prayer; but when a man lives habitually in sin, or even occasionally falls into sin, he cannot pray so as to prevail, he cannot win the ear of God as he used to do. You know right well that, if you have offended the Lord in any way, you cannot enjoy the gospel as you did before you so sinned. The Bible, instead of smiling upon you, seems to threaten you, in every text and every line; it seems to rise up, as in letters of fire, and burn its way into your conscience.

It is certainly true that the Lord deals differently with his own children according to their condition and character. So, when a man is brought into such a state of heart that he keeps Christ's words, then his character is of such a kind that God can take a complacent delight in him, and in this sense can love him. It is in such a case as this that the Father will let us know that he loves us, that he will assure us of that love, and shed it abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost. He will give us special blessings, perhaps in providence, but certainly in grace. He will give us special joy and rejoicing; our horn shall be exalted, and our feet shall stand upon the high places of the earth. All things—even his trials—shall be

blessed to the man who walks aright with God; and the way to do that is to love Christ, and to keep his words. Of such a man, Jesus says, "My Father will love him."

IV. If you have passed through these three gates, you come to another which bears this inscription, "WE WILL COME UNTO HIM."

This is a singular use of the plural pronoun: "*We* will come unto him." It is a proof of the distinct personality of the Father and of the Son. Jesus says, "If a man love me," (do not forget the previous links in this blessed gospel chain,) "he will keep my words: and my Father will love him;" and then follows this gracious assurance: "We will come unto him." Does not this mean, first, *distance removed?* There is no longer a gap between such a man's soul and his God. He feels heavy in heart, perhaps, and thinks, "I cannot get near to God;" but he hears this comforting message, "We will come unto him;" and, soon, over all the mountains of division that there may have been in the past, like a roe, or a young hart, the Well-beloved comes; and the great Father, when he sees, in the distance, his child returning to him, runs to meet him, and folds him to his heart. What a wondrous divine coming this is! Christ and his Father, by the Holy Spirit, come to pay the believer a most gracious visit. Yes, beloved, if you are living in love to Christ, and keeping his words, there will not be any distance separating you from the Father and the Son, but the text will be blessedly fulfilled in your experience, "We will come unto him."

And, while it means distance removed, it also means *honour conferred.* Many a great nobleman has beggared himself that he might receive a prince or a king into his house; the entertainment of royalty has meant the mortgaging of his estates; that is a poor return for the honour of receiving a visit from his sovereign. But, behold, my brothers and sisters, how different it is with us. The obedient lover of the Lord Jesus Christ has the Father and the Son to visit him, and he is greatly enriched by their coming. He may be very poor, but Jesus says, "We will come unto him." He may be obscure and illiterate, but Jesus says, "We will come unto him." Do you all, dear friends, know what this coming means? Did you ever know the Son to come to you with his precious blood applied to your conscience, till you realized that every one of your sins was forgiven? Have you taken Jesus up in your arms, spiritually, as old Simeon did literally, and said, with him, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation"? Has Jesus seemed, to your faith, to be as near to you as one who sat on the same chair with you, and talked with you in most familiar conversation? It has been so with some of us, and it has often been so.

This also has meant *knowledge increased.* Jesus has revealed himself to us by coming to us, even as he came to the two disciples on the way to Emmaus. Then, in addition, have you not known the Father come to you, in his Divine relationship, yet making you feel yourself his child, and causing you to realize that he loved you as truly as you love your own children, only much more deeply and fervently than human love can ever be? Have you not received,

at his hands, such tokens for good, and such benedictions as only he could give, so that you felt the Divine Fatherhood to be something coming very near to you, and the Spirit of God, operating within you, has made you cry, "Abba, Father," with an unstammering tongue? "We will come unto him." The Saviour will come, and the Father will come, and the blessed Spirit will represent them both in the believer's heart.

So, "We will come unto him," means distance removed, honour conferred, and knowledge increased; and it also means *assistance brought;* for, if the Father and the Son come to us, what more can we need? With their gracious presence in our souls, we have omnipotence and omniscience, infinity and all-sufficiency, on our side, and grace to help us in every time of need.

V. The last clause of the text, and the sweetest of all, is, "AND MAKE OUR ABODE WITH HIM."

Can you catch the full meaning of that phrase? Jesus says that the Father and the Son will visit us; they will come to us, as the three blessed ones came to Abraham when he was at the tent door, and he entertained the Lord and his attendant angels; but they did not make their abode with him. They went on their way, and Abraham was left in the plains of Mamre. God often visited Abraham, and spake familiarly with him, but our Saviour's promise goes beyond that; he says, "We will come unto him, and make our *abode* with him." To make your abode with a person, is for that person and yourself to have the same house and home, and to live together. In this case, it means that the Lord will make his people to be his temple wherein he will dwell continually. "We will come unto him, and make our abode with him." I have turned that thought over and over again until I have got the sweetness of it into my own heart; but I cannot communicate it to your minds and hearts; only the Holy Spirit can do that.

See what this expression means. *What knowledge of one another is implied here!* Do you want to know a person? You must live with him; you do not really know anybody, however much you may think you know, until you have done so. But, oh, if the Father and the Son come and live with us, we shall know them,—know the Father and the Son! This is not the portion of carnal minds; neither is it for professing Christians who have not fulfilled the conditions laid down by our Lord; but it is for those who love Christ, and keep his words, those who consciously live in the enjoyment of the Father's complacency, and who have fellowship with the Father and with the Son by the Spirit. To these privileged individuals, God reveals himself in his triune personality, and to them he will make known all that is in his covenant of love and mercy.

This expression also implies *a sacred friendship;* for, when God comes to dwell with men, he does not thus dwell with his enemies, but only with those who love him, and between whom and himself there is mutual sympathy. O beloved, if God the Father and God the Son shall indeed come to dwell with us, it will be to us a proof of wondrous love, and dear familiarity, and intense friendship! If you go to live with an earthly friend, it is quite possible for you to

stay too long, and to outstay your welcome. But God knows all about the man with whom he comes to live, and Jesus says, "We will make our abode with him," because he knows that his Spirit has purified and sanctified that heart, and made it ready to receive himself, and his Father, too. You remember how Jeremiah pleaded with the Lord not merely to be as a sojourner: "O the hope of Israel, the Saviour thereof in time of trouble, why shouldest thou be as a stranger in the land, and as a wayfaring man that turneth aside to tarry for a night?" But this is not the way that the Father and the Son deal with us, for Jesus says that they will make their abode with us. Does not this imply a very sacred friendship indeed between God and our soul?

It also reveals *the complete acceptance of the man before God;* for, when anyone comes to stay with you, it is taken for granted that you exercise hospitality towards him; he eats and drinks in your house; and, for the time, he makes himself at home with you. "But," you ask, "is it possible that God should accept the hospitality of man?" Yes, it is; listen to the words of Christ himself: "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." Oh, the blessedness of thus entertaining the King of kings! Then will he drink of my milk and my wine, and eat the pleasant fruits that are grown in the garden of my soul. Will that which I present to him be acceptable to him? It must be, or else he would not live in my house? And when the Father and the Son come to dwell in the soul of the believer, then all that he does will be accepted; if he is himself accepted, his thoughts and his words, his prayers and his praises, his almsgiving and his labours for Christ will be accepted by both the Father and the Son.

What a blessed state for anyone to reach! For then it shall come to pass that this reception, on God's part, from us, shall be followed by a sevenfold reception, on our part, from him. You do not imagine, I hope, that, when God the Father and God the Son make their abode in a man, that the man will continue to be just as he was when they came to him. No, my brethren; the Lord pays well for his lodging; where he stays, he turns everything that he touches into gold. When he comes into a human heart, it may be dark, but he floods it with the light of heaven. It may have been cold before, but he warms it with the glow of his almighty love. A man without the indwelling of God is like the bush in Horeb when it was only a bush; but when the Father and the Son come to him, then it is with him as when the bush burned with fire, yet was not consumed. The Lord brings heaven to you when he comes to you, and you are rich beyond the intents of bliss. All things are yours, for you are Christ's, and Christ is God's, and Christ and God have come to make their abode with you.

Now, according to our Lord's promise, "We will come to him, and will make our abode with him, it is implied that *there they mean to stop.* Let me take your thoughts back, for a minute, to the earlier links in this blessed gospel chain, and remind you that it is only "*if a man love me,*" and it is only "*if he keep my words,*" that

the Saviour's promise applies: "We will come unto him, and make our abode with him." Have the Father and the Son come to your heart? Then, I charge you, do nothing that might cause them to depart from you even for a moment. If you ever get into conscious enjoyment of the divine indwelling, be jealous of your heart lest it should ever from your Lord depart, or drive him from you. Say, with the spouse, "I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, until he please."

"But," perhaps you ask, "can we keep him? Can we keep him always?" I believe you can. By the blessed help of the Divine Spirit, who has taught you to love him, and to keep his words, you may have near and dear fellowship with your Lord by the month and by the year together. I am sure that we have too low a standard of the possibilities of Christian fellowship, and Christian enjoyment, and Christian living. Aim at the highest conceivable degree of holiness; and, though you will not be perfect, never excuse yourselves because you are not. Always aim at something higher and yet higher still than you have already reached; ask the Lord to come and abide with you for ever. You will be happy Christians if you attain to this privilege, and keep in that condition; and we shall be a blessed church if the most or all of us should attain to it. I mean to go in for this blessing, by God's gracious help; will not you, my brother, my sister? Can any of you be content to live a lower life than is possible to you? I hope you will not be; but that you will reach all of these steps that I have pointed out to you, and ask God in prayer to help you to surmount them. "Lord, help me to love Jesus. Set my soul on fire with love to him. Lord, enable me to keep all his words, and never to trifle with his truth in anything. And then, Father, look upon me with complacency. Make me such that thou canst take delight in me. See the resemblance to thy Son in me, because thou hast made me to be like him; and then, Father, and Saviour, come and abide with me for ever and ever. Amen." Such a prayer as that, truly presented, will be answered, and the Lord shall get glory from it.

But, alas! many of you have nothing to do with this text because you do not love Christ; and the first thing you have to do is not to think about loving him, but about trusting him, for you know that the only way of salvation is by trusting Christ; so, if you do not trust him, you are not in the way of salvation. Have you ever thought of what is involved in being an unbeliever? The apostle John says, "he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son." Do you really mean to make God out to be a liar? Surely, you cannot; the very thought is too horrible to be entertained for a moment. Well, then, believe his record concerning his Son. That record declares that he is the propitiation for our sins; then, if you rely upon that propitiation, and trust to him who made it, you are saved.

I often have the remark made to me, by an anxious soul, "But, sir, I cannot believe; I wish I could." This is the answer which I generally give to the person who says that:—"What! you cannot

believe? Come, now, let us have that matter out. You cannot believe God? Could you believe me?" Of course, the answer is, "Oh, yes, sir; I can believe you!" I reply,—"Yes, I suppose that is because you have confidence in my character, and believe that I would not tell you a lie. Then, in the name of everything that is good and reasonable, how is it that you dare say that you cannot believe God? Is he a liar? Has he ever given you any cause to say to him, 'I cannot believe you'? What do you mean? Give me some reason why you cannot believe God? What has he done that you cannot believe him?" Well, they do not quite see it in that light; but, still, they return to that sentence, "I cannot believe." Well now, sinner, if Jesus Christ were present, and he were to say to you, "Trust me, and I will save you; believe my promise, and you shall enter into eternal life;" would you look him in the face, and say, "I cannot believe thee"? And if he asked you the question, "Why canst thou not believe me?" what would be your reply? Surely, a man can believe what is true. There have been times, with me, since I have known the Saviour, when it seemed to me as if I could not doubt my Lord,—as if I could not find a reason, even if I ransacked heaven, and earth, and hell, why I should doubt him. I protest that I do not know any reason why I should not trust Christ; I cannot conceive of any. Well, will men continue this monstrous, unjust, ungenerous conduct? Alas, they will.

"But," says someone, "if I do trust my soul to Christ, will he save me?" Try him, and see; you have his own promise that he will cast out none who come unto him. So, if thou believest in the Lord Jesus Christ this very moment,—this very moment thou art saved. What more need I say? May the Blessed Spirit cause you to cease, by your unbelief, from practically making God a liar, and may you now come and trust in Jesus, the Substitute and Surety for his people! So shall you rest your weary hearts upon his loving bosom, and it shall be well with you for ever and ever. May God bless you all, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

JOHN XIV. 15—31.

Verses 15, 16. *If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;*

Is it not very sweet to think that the Spirit of God is given to the Church in answer to the prayer of Christ? Prayer is a holy exercise, for Jesus prayed; and what a powerful influence prayer has, for his prayer has brought to us "another Comforter,"—

17. *Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him:*

This poor world will not receive anything which it cannot see. It is ruled by its senses; it is carnal and fleshly, and mindeth not the things that are unseen. It cannot discern them.

17, 18. *But ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.*

That expression, "I will not leave you comfortless," might be rendered, "I will not leave you orphans."

19. *Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also.*

What a wealth of meaning these words contain! The sentences are very simple, but they are also sublime. The gorgeous language, in which some orators indulge, is, when the meaning of it is condensed, like great clouds of steam which produce but a few drops of water. But, here, you have vast truths pressed into a small compass, and those that seem most plain are really the most deep.

"Because I live, ye shall live also." As surely as Christ lives, so must his people. They cannot die, for he lives, to die no more, and they live in him.

20. *At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.*

Mysterious triple union,—Christ in the Father, we in Christ, and Christ in us. This is a complete riddle to all who have never been taught of the Spirit of God.

21, 22. *He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?*

He did really answer the question, though perhaps not directly. This is the process by which he manifests himself unto his people, and not unto the world:—

23, 24. *Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me.*

There is Divine authority at the back of every word uttered by the Man Christ Jesus. His message comes not from himself alone, but from the Eternal Father as well.

25—28. *These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I.*

And truly so he was, for Christ had, for a while, laid aside his own greatness, and taken the position of a servant.

29, 30. *And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe. Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.*

His words must come to an end, for he was going to perform his mightiest deeds. He could converse no longer, for he was going from converse to conflict. He must meet his great enemy now, and leave his dearest friends.

31. *But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence.*

And so he went to the garden of Gethsemane,—a brave, gentle, confident, victorious spirit, "straitened" till he had accomplished the great work of our redemption.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

HARVEST TIME.*

A Sermon

PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 11TH, 1904,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,

In August, 1854.

"Is it not wheat harvest to-day?"—1 Samuel xii. 17.

I SHALL not notice the connection; but I shall simply take these words as a motto; and my sermon will be founded upon a harvest field. I shall rather use the harvest for my text than any passage that I find here. "Is it not wheat harvest to-day?" I suppose the dwellers in cities think less of times and seasons than dwellers in the country. Men who were born, trained up, nourished and nurtured among corn-fields, harvests, sowings, and reapings, are more likely to notice such things than you who are always engaged in mercantile pursuits, and think less of these things than rustics do. But I suppose, if it is almost necessary that you should less regard the harvest than others, it ought not to be carried to too great an extent. Let us not be forgetful of times and seasons. There is much to be learned from them, and I would refresh your memories by a harvest field. What a wondrous temple this world is; for in truth it is a temple of God's building, wherein men ought to worship him. What a wondrous temple it is to a mind spiritually enlightened, which can bring to bear upon it the resources of intellect, and the illuminations of God's Holy Spirit! There is not a single flower in it that does not teach us a lesson, there is not a single wave, or blast of thunder, that has not some lesson to teach to us, the sons of men. This world is a great temple, and as, if you walk in an Egyptian temple, you know that every mark and every figure in the temple has a meaning, so when you walk this world, you must believe that everything about

* A peculiar and even unique interest attaches to the present Sermon, as it was the first of Mr. SPURGEON's discourses that was ever printed. Although it has appeared in another form, the publishers thought it ought to be included in the regular weekly series, so it is now reprinted exactly fifty years after it was delivered. When cholera was desolating London, and the wicked war in the Crimea was still being waged, the young pastor sounded a cheerful note to comfort the Christians of that day, while he also warned others of the consequences of continuance in evil-doing. The message spoken half a century ago is by no means out of date even now.

you has a meaning. It is no fanciful idea that there are "sermons in stones"; for there really are sermons in stones, and this world is intended to teach us by everything that we see. Happy is the man who only has the mind, and has the spirit to get these lessons from Nature. Flowers, what are they? They are but the thoughts of God solidified, God's beautiful thoughts put into shape. Storms, what are they? They are God's terrible thoughts written out that we may read them. Thunders, what are they? They are God's powerful emotions just opened out that men may hear them. The world is just the materializing of God's thoughts; for the world is a thought in God's eye. He made it first from a thought that came from his own mighty mind, and everything in the majestic temple that he has made, has a meaning.

In this temple there are four evangelists. As we have four great evangelists in the Bible, so there are four evangelists in Nature; and these are the four evangelists of the seasons,—spring, summer, autumn, winter.

First comes spring, and what says it? We look, and we behold that, by the magic touch of spring, insects which seemed to be dead begin to awaken, and seeds that were buried in the dust begin to lift up their radiant forms. What says spring? It utters its voice, it says to man, "Though thou sleepest, thou shalt rise again; there is a world in which, in a more glorious state, thou shalt exist; thou art but a seed now, and thou shalt be buried in the dust, and in a little while thou shalt arise." Spring utters that part of its evangel. Then comes summer. Summer says to man, "Behold the goodness of a merciful Creator; 'he makes his sun to shine on the evil and on the good,' he sprinkleth the earth with flowers, he adorneth it with those gems of creation, he maketh it blossom like Eden, and bring forth like the garden of the Lord." Summer utters that; then comes autumn. We shall hear its message. It passes, and forth comes winter, crowned with a coronal of ice, and it tells us that there are times of trouble for man; it points to the fruits that we have stored up in autumn, and it says to us, "Man, take heed that thou store up something for thyself; something against the day of wrath; lay up for thyself the fruits of autumn, that thou mayest be able to feed on them in winter." And when the old year expires, its deathknell tells us that man must die; and when the year has finished its evangelistic mission, there comes another to preach the same lesson again.

We are about to let autumn preach. One of these four evangelists comes forth, and it says, "Is it not wheat harvest to-day?" We are about to take the harvest into consideration in order to learn something from it. May God's most blessed Spirit help his feeble dust and ashes to preach the unsearchable riches of God to your souls' profit!

We shall talk of three joyful harvests and of three sorrowful harvests.

I. First, we shall speak of THREE JOYFUL HARVESTS that there will be.

The first joyful harvest that I will mention is *the harvest of the*

field which Samuel alluded to when he said, "Is it not wheat harvest to-day?" We cannot forget the harvest of the field. It is not meet that these things should be forgotten; we ought not to let the fields be covered with corn, and to have their treasures stored away in the barns, and all the while to remain forgetful of God's mercy. Ingratitude, that worst of ills, is one of the vipers which make their nest in the heart of man, and the creature cannot be slain until divine grace comes there, and sprinkles the blood of the cross upon man's heart. Such vipers die when the blood of Christ is upon them. Let me just lead you for a moment to a harvest field. You shall see there a most luxuriant harvest, the heavy ears bending down almost to touch the ground, as much as to say, "From the ground I came, I owe myself to the ground, to that I bow my head," just as the good Christian does when he is full of years. He holds his head down the more fruit he has upon him. You see the stalks with their heads hanging down, because they are ripe. And it is goodly and precious to see these things.

Now just suppose the contrary. If this year the ears had been blighted and withered; if they had been like the second ears that Pharaoh saw, very lean and very scanty, what would have become of us? In peace, we might have depended on large supplies from Russia to make up the deficiency; now, in times of war,* when nothing can come, what would become of us? We may conjecture, we may imagine, but I do not know that we are able to come to the truth; we can only say, "Blessed be God, we have not yet to reckon on what would have been; but God, seeing one door closed, has opened another." Seeing that we might not get supplies from those rich fields in the South of Russia, he has opened another door in our own land. "Thou art my own favoured island," says he; "I have loved thee, England, with a special love, thou art my favoured one, and the enemy shall not crush thee; and lest thou shouldst starve, because provisions are cut off, I will give thee thy barns full at home, and thy fields shall be covered, that thou mayest laugh thine enemy to scorn, and say to him, 'Thou thoughtest thou couldst starve us, and make us perish; but he, who feeds the ravens, has fed his people, and has not deserted his favoured land.'" There is not one person who is uninterested in this matter. Some say the poor ought to be thankful that there is abundance of bread. So ought the rich. There is nothing which happens to one member of society which does not affect all. The ranks lean upon one another; if there is scarcity in the lower ranks, it falls upon the next, and the next, and even the Queen upon her throne feels in some degree the scarcity when God is pleased to send it. It affects all men. Let none say, "Whatever the price of corn may be, I can live;" but rather bless God who has given you more than enough. Your prayer ought to be, "Give us this day our daily bread;" and remember that, whatever wealth you have, you must attribute your daily mercies as much to God as if you lived from hand to mouth; and sometimes that is a blessed way of living,—when God gives his children the hand-basket

* Referring to the war in the Crimea.

portion, instead of sending it in a mass. Bless God that he has sent an abundant harvest! O fearful one, lift up thine head! and thou discontented one, be thou abashed, and let thy discontent no more be known! The Jews used to observe the feast of tabernacles when the harvest time came. In the country they always have a "harvest home," and why should not we? I want you all to have one. Rejoice! rejoice! rejoice! for the harvest is come,—"Is it not wheat harvest to-day?" Poor desponding soul, let all your doubts and fears be gone. "Thy bread shall be given thee, and thy waters shall be sure." That is one joyful harvest.

Now, the second joyful harvest is *the harvest of every Christian.* In one sense, the Christian is the seed; in another, he is a sower. In one sense, he is a seed, sown by God, which is to grow, and ripen, and germinate, till the great harvest time. In another sense, every Christian is a sower sent into the world to sow good seed, and to sow good seed only. I do not say that Christian men never sow any other seed than good seed. Sometimes, in unguarded moments, they take garlic into their hands instead of wheat; and we may sow tares instead of corn. Christians sometimes make mistakes, and God sometimes suffers his people to fall, so that they sow sins; but the Christian never reaps his sins; Christ reaps them for him. He often has to have a decoction made of the bitter leaves of sin, but he never reaps the fruit of it. Christ has borne the punishment. Yet bear in mind, if you and I sin against God, God will take our sin, and he will get an essence from it that will be bitter to our taste; though he does not make us eat the fruits, yet still he will make us grieve and sorrow over our sins. But the Christian, as I have said, should be employed in sowing good seed; and doing so, he shall have a glorious harvest.

In some sense or other, the Christian must be sowing seed. If God calls him to the ministry, he is a seed sower; if God calls him to the Sabbath-school, he is a seed sower; whatever his office, he is a sower of seed. I sow seed broadcast all over this immense field; I cannot tell where my seed goes. Some are like barren ground, and they refuse to receive the seed that I sow. I cannot help it if any man should do so. I am only responsible to God, whose servant I am. There are others, and my seed falls upon them, and brings forth a little fruit, but by-and-by, when the sun is up, because of persecution, they wither away and they die. But I hope there are many who are like the good ground that God has prepared, and when I scatter the seed abroad, it falls on good ground, and brings forth fruit to an abundant harvest. Ah! the minister has a joyful harvest, even in this world, when he sees souls converted. I have had a harvest time when I have led the sheep down to the washing of baptism, when I have seen God's people coming out from the mass of the world, and telling what the Lord has done for their souls,—when God's children are edified, and built up, it is worth living for, and worth dying ten thousand deaths for, to be the means of saving one soul. What a joyful harvest it is when God gives us converted ones by tens and hundreds, and adds to his church abundantly such as shall be saved! Now I am like a farmer just

at this season of the year. I have got a good deal of wheat down, and I want to get it into the barn, for fear the rain comes and spoils it. I believe I have got a great many, but they will persist in standing out in the field. I want to get them into the barns. They are good people, but they do not like to make a profession, and join the church. I want to get them into my Master's granary, and to see Christians added to the church. I see some holding down their heads, and saying, "He means us." So I do. You ought before this to have joined Christ's church; and unless you are fit to be gathered into Christ's little garner here on earth, you have no right to anticipate being gathered into that great garner which is in heaven.

Every Christian has his harvest. The Sabbath-school teacher has his harvest. He goes and toils, and he ploughs very stony ground often, but he shall have his harvest. Oh, poor labouring Sabbath-school teacher, hast thou seen no fruit yet? Dost thou say, "Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" Cheer up, thou dost labour in a good cause, there must be some to do thy work. Hast thou seen no children converted? Fear not,—

"Though seed lie buried long in dust,
It shan't deceive your hope,
The precious grain can ne'er be lost,
For God insures the crop."

Go on sowing still, and thou shalt have a harvest when thou shalt see children converted. I have known some Sabbath-school teachers who could count a dozen, or twenty, or thirty children, who have, one after another, come to know the Lord Jesus Christ, and to join the church. But if you should not live to see it on earth, remember you are only accountable for your labour, and not for your success. Sow still, toil on! "Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days." God will not allow his Word to be wasted; it shall not return unto him void, but shall accomplish that which he pleases. There may be a poor mother, who has often been sad. She has a son and a daughter, and she has been always praying that God might convert their souls. Mother, thy son is an ungainly boy still; he grieves thy heart; still the hot tears scald thy cheeks on account of him. And thou, father, thou hast reproved him often; he is a wayward son, and he is still running the downward road. Cease not to pray! O my brethren and sisters, who are parents, you shall have a harvest!

There was a boy once, a very sinful child, who hearkened not to the counsel of his parents; but his mother prayed for him, and now he stands to preach to this congregation every Sabbath. And when his mother thinks of her first-born preaching the gospel, she reaps a glorious harvest that makes her a glad woman. Now, fathers and mothers, such may be your case. However bad your children are at present, still press toward the throne of grace, and you shall have a harvest. What thinkest thou, mother, wouldst thou not rejoice to see thy son a minister of the gospel; thy daughter teaching and assisting in the cause of God? God will not suffer thee to pray, and thy prayers be unheeded.

Young man, thy mother has been wrestling for thee a long time, and she has not won thy soul yet. What thinkest thou? Thou defraudest thy mother of her harvest! If she had a little patch of ground, hard by her cottage, where she had sown some wheat, wouldst thou go and burn it? If she had a choice flower in her garden, wouldst thou go and trample it under foot? But by going on in the ways of the reprobate, thou art defrauding thy father and thy mother of their harvest. Perhaps there are some parents who are weeping over their sons and daughters, who are hardened and unconverted. O God, turn their hearts! for bitter is the doom of that man who goes to hell over the road that is washed by his mother's tears, stumbles over his father's reproofs, and tramples on those things which God has put in his way,—his mother's prayers and his father's sighs. God help that man who dares to do such a thing as that! And it is wondrous grace if he does help him.

You shall have a harvest, whatever you are doing. I trust you are all doing something. If I cannot mention what your peculiar engagement is, I trust you are all serving God in some way; and you shall assuredly have a harvest wherever you are scattering your seed. But suppose the worst,—if you should never live to see the harvest in this world, you shall have a harvest when you get to heaven. If you live and die a disappointed man in this world, you shall not be disappointed in the next. I think how surprised some of God's people will be when they get to heaven. They will see their Master, and he will give them a crown. "Lord, what is that crown for?" "That crown is because thou didst give a cup of cold water to one of my disciples." "What! a crown for a cup of cold water?" "Yes," says the Master, "that is how I pay my servants. First I give them grace to give that cup of water, and then, having given them grace, I give them a crown." "Wonders of grace to God belong." He that soweth liberally shall reap liberally; and he that soweth grudgingly shall reap sparingly. Ah, if there could be grief in heaven, I think it would be the grief of some Christians who had sown so very little. After all, how little the most of us ever sow! I know I sow but very little compared with what I might. How little any of you sow! Just add up how much you give to God in the year. I am afraid it would not come to a farthing per cent. Remember, you reap according to what you sow. O my friends, what surprise some of you will feel when God pays you for sowing one single grain! The soil of heaven is rich in the extreme. If a farmer had such ground as there is in heaven, he would say, "I must sow a great many acres of land;" and so let us strive, for the more we sow, the more shall we reap in heaven. Yet remember it is all of grace, and not of debt.

Now, beloved, I must very hastily mention the third joyful harvest. We have had the harvest of the field, and the harvest of the Christian. We are now to have another, and that is *the harvest of Christ.*

Christ had his sowing times. What bitter sowing times were they! Christ was one who went out bearing precious seed. Oh, I picture Christ sowing the world! He sowed it with tears; he sowed it with drops of blood; he sowed it with sighs; he sowed it with agony of

heart; and at last he sowed himself in the ground, to be the seed of a glorious crop. What a sowing time his was! He sowed in tears, in poverty, in sympathy, in grief, in agony, in woes, in suffering, and in death. He shall have a harvest, too. Blessings on his name, Jehovah swears it; the everlasting predestination of the Almighty has settled that Christ shall have a harvest. He has sown, and he shall reap; he has scattered, and he shall gather in. "He shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days; and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hands." My friends, Christ has begun to reap his harvest. Yea, every soul that is converted is part of his reward; every one who comes to the Lord is a part of it. Every soul that is brought out of the miry clay, and set on the King's highway, is a part of Christ's crop. But he is going to reap more yet. There is another harvest coming, in the latter day, when he shall reap armfuls at a time, and gather the sheaves into his garner. Now, men come to Christ in ones and twos and threes; but, then, they shall come in flocks, so that the church shall say, "Who are these that come in as doves to their windows?"

There shall be a greater harvest when time shall be no more. Turn to the 14th chapter of Revelation, and the 13th verse: "And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them." They do not go before them, and win them heaven. "And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud One sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped." That was Christ's harvest. Observe but one particular. When Christ comes to reap his field, he comes with a crown on. There are the nations gathered together before that crowned Reaper!

> "They come, they come: the exiled bands,
> Where'er they rest or roam;
> They heard his voice in distant lands,
> And hastened to their home."

There they stand, one great army before God. Then comes the crowned Reaper from his throne; he takes his sharp sickle, and see him reap sheaf after sheaf, and he carries them up to the heavenly garner. Let us ask the question of ourselves, whether we shall be among the reaped ones,—the wheat of the Lord.

Notice again, that there was first a harvest, and then a vintage. The harvest is the righteous; the vintage is the wicked. When the wicked are gathered, an angel gathers them; but Christ will not trust an angel to reap the righteous. "He that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle." O my soul, when thou comest to die, Christ will himself come after thee; when thou art to be cut down, he that sits upon the throne will cut thee down with a very sharp sickle, in

order that he may do it as easily as possible. He will be the Reaper himself; no reaper will be allowed to gather Christ's saints in, but Christ the King of saints. Oh, will it not be a joyful harvest when all the chosen race, every one of them, shall be gathered in? There is a little shrivelled grain of wheat there, that has been growing somewhere on the headland, and that will be there. There are a great many who have been hanging down their heads, heavy with grain, and they will be there too. They will all be gathered in.

"His honour is engaged to save
The meanest of his sheep;
All that his heavenly Father gave
His hands securely keep."

II. But now we are obliged to turn to THE THREE SAD HARVESTS. Alas! alas; the world was once like an Eolian harp; every wind that blew upon it gave forth melody; now the strings are all unstrung, and they are full of discord, so that, when we have a strain of joy, we must have the deep bass of grief to come after it.

The first sad harvest is *the harvest of death.* We are all living, and what for? For the grave. I have sometimes sat me down, and had a reverie like this. I have thought: Man, what is he? He grows, and grows, till he comes to his prime; and when he is forty-five, if God spare him, perhaps he has then gained the prime of life. What does he do then? He continues where he is a little while, and then he goes down the hill; and if he keeps on living, what is it for? To die. But there are many chances to one, as the world has it, that he will not live to be seventy. He may die very early. Do we not all live to die? But none shall die till they are ripe. Death never reaps his corn green, he never cuts his corn till it is ripe. The wicked die, but they are always ripe for hell when they die; the righteous die, but they are always ripe for heaven when they die. That poor thief there, who had not believed in Jesus, perhaps an hour before he died,—he was as ripe as a seventy years' saint. The saint is always ready for glory whenever death, the reaper, comes, and the wicked are always ripe for hell whenever God pleases to send for them. Oh, that great reaper; he sweeps through the earth, and mows his hundreds and thousands down! It is all still; death makes no noise about his movements, and he treads with velvet footfall over the earth; that ceaseless mower, none can resist him. He is irresistible, and he mows, and mows, and cuts them down. Sometimes he stops and whets his scythe; he dips his scythe in blood, and then he mows us down with war; then he takes his whetstone of cholera, and mows down more than ever. Still he cries, "More! more! more!" Ceaselessly that work keeps on! Wondrous mower! Wondrous reaper! Oh, when thou comest to reap me, I cannot resist thee; for I must fall like others;—when thou comest, I shall have nothing to say to thee. Like a blade of corn I must stand motionless; and thou must cut me down! But, oh! may I be prepared for thy scythe! May the Lord stand by me, and comfort me, and cheer me; and may I find that death is an angel of life,—that death is the portal of heaven, the vestibule of glory!

There is a second sad harvest, and that is *the harvest that the wicked man has to reap*. Thus saith the voice of inspiration, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Now there is a harvest that every wicked man has to reap in this world. No man ever sins against *his body* without reaping a harvest for it. The young man says, "I have sinned with impunity." Stay, thou young man! go there to that hospital, and see sufferers writhing in their agony. See that staggering, bloated wretch, and I tell thee, stay thy hand! lest thou become like him. Wisdom bids thee stop; for thy steps lead down to hell. If thou enterest into the house of the strange woman, thou shalt reap a harvest. There is a harvest that every man reaps if he sins against *his fellows*. The man who sins against his fellow-creature shall reap a harvest. Some men walk through the world like knights with spurs on their heels, and think they may tread on whom they please; but they shall find their mistake. He who sins against others, sins against himself; that is Nature. It is a law in Nature that a man cannot hurt his fellows without hurting himself. Now, you who cause grief to others' minds, do not think the grief will end there; you will have to reap a harvest even here. Again, a man cannot sin against *his estate* without reaping the effects of it. The miserly wretch, who hoards up his gold, sins against his gold. It becomes cankered, and from those golden sovereigns he will have to reap a harvest; yes, that miserly wretch, sitting up at night, and straining his weary eyes to count his gold, that man reaps his harvest. And so does the young spendthrift. He will reap his harvest when all his treasure is exhausted. It is said of the prodigal, that "no man gave unto him,"—none of those that he used to entertain,—and so the prodigal shall find it. No man shall give anything unto him. Ah! but the worst harvest will be that of those who sin against *the Church of Christ*. I would not that a man should sin against his body; I would not that a man should sin against his estate; I would not that a man should sin against his fellows; but, most of all, I would not have him touch Christ's Church. He that touches one of God's people, touches the apple of his eye. When I have read of some people finding fault with the servants of the Lord, I have thought within myself, "I would not do so." It is the greatest insult to a man to speak ill of his children. You speak ill of God's children, and you will be rewarded for it in everlasting punishment. There is not a single one of God's family whom God does not love, and if you touch one of them, he will have vengeance on you. Nothing puts a man on his mettle like touching his children; and if you touch God's Church, you will have the direst vengeance of all. The hottest flames of hell are for those who touch God's children. Go on, sinner, laugh at religion if thou pleasest; but know that it is the blackest sin in the whole catalogue of crime. God will forgive anything sooner than that; and though that is not unpardonable; yet, if not repented of, it will meet the greatest punishment. God cannot bear that his elect should be touched, and if you do so, it is the greatest crime you can commit.

The third sad harvest is *the harvest of almighty wrath*, when the wicked at last are gathered in. In the 14th chapter of Revelation,

you will see that the vine of the earth was cast into the winepress of the wrath of God; and, after that, the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out, up to the horses' bridles;—a wonderful figure to express the wrath of God! Suppose, then, some great winepress, in which our bodies are put like grapes; and suppose some mighty giant comes and treads us all under foot; that is the idea,—that the wicked shall be cast together, and be trodden under foot until the blood runs out up to the horses' bridles. May God grant, of his sovereign mercy, that you and I may never be reaped in that fearful harvest; but that rather we may be written amongst the saints of the Lord!

You shall have a harvest in due season if you faint not. Sow on, brother; sow on, sister; and in due time thou shalt reap an abundant harvest. Let me tell you one thing, if the seed thou hast sown a long while, has never come up. I was told once: "When you sow seeds in your garden, put them in a little water over-night, they will grow all the better for it." So, if thou hast been sowing thy seed, put it into tears, and it will make thy seed germinate the better. "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy." Steep your seed in tears, and then put it into the ground, and you shall reap in joy. No bird can devour that seed; no bird can hold it in its mouth. No worm can eat it, for worms never eat seeds that are sown in tears. Go thy way, and when thou weepest most, then it is that thou sowest best. When most cast down, thou art doing best. If thou comest to the prayer-meeting, and has not a word to say, keep on praying; do not give it up, for thou often prayest best when thou thinkest thou prayest worst. Go on, and in due season, by God's mighty grace, you shall reap if you faint not.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

1 SAMUEL XII.

In Samuel's old age, the people desired to have a king; and though it went much against the grain, yet, by the Lord's advice, Samuel consented to it. Here he makes his last protest.

Verse 1. *And Samuel said unto all Israel, Behold, I have hearkened unto your voice in all that ye said unto me, and have made a king over you.*

"I have not stood in your way. I have not sought mine own honour. I have at once frankly resigned my office among you."

2. *And now, behold, the king walketh before you: and I am old and gray-headed; and, behold, my sons are with you: and I have walked before you from my childhood unto this day.*

"My sons come here to-day, not as my successors, but as fellow-subjects with you of your newly-chosen king; they are not in opposition to him any more than I am."

Like an old servant who is about to be dismissed, Samuel asks them to bear witness to his character; and this he does, partly as a lesson to the king who had taken his place, and partly as a clearance of himself in rendering up his charge.

3. *Behold, here I am: witness against me before the LORD, and before his*

anointed: whose ox have I taken? or whose ass have I taken? or whom have I defrauded? whom have I oppressed? or of whose hand have I received any bribe to blind mine eyes therewith? and I will restore it you.

It is so usual a thing, among Oriental judges and rulers, to expect bribes, that you cannot, in those countries, take a single step in a court of law without bribery. It was therefore a very unusual circumstance that Samuel should be able to challenge anybody to say that he had ever wrongfully taken so much as a single farthing. And the great rulers, in those countries, are accustomed to enrich themselves by levying heavy taxes upon the people. But Samuel affirmed that his services had been perfectly gratuitous, so that all he had done for the people had cost them nothing. If they had any fault to find with his government, it could only be because it had been so just and also so cheap; his yoke had indeed been easy to their necks. What a fine sight it is to see an old man able thus to challenge all who had known him, throughout a long life, to testify that he had not led a selfish life, or studied his own interests even in the least degree!

4, 5. *And they said, Thou hast not defrauded us, nor oppressed us, neither hast thou taken ought of any man's hand. And he said unto them, The* LORD *is witness against you, and his anointed is witness this day, that ye have not found ought in my hand. And they answered, He is witness.*

In the most solemn way, they cleared him; when he rendered to them the account of his stewardship, they all bore witness that everything had been done, not merely according to strict rectitude, but in the most generous spirit of self-consecration. May all of us be enabled so to live that, when our sun goes down, it shall be as cloudless a sunset as was that of Samuel!

6—8. *And Samuel said unto the people, It is the* LORD *that advanced Moses and Aaron, and that brought your fathers up out of the land of Egypt. Now therefore stand still, that I may reason with you before the* LORD *of all the righteous acts of the* LORD, *which he did to you and to your fathers. When Jacob was come into Egypt, and your fathers cried unto the* LORD, *then the* LORD *sent Moses and Aaron, which brought forth your fathers out of Egypt, and made them dwell in this place.*

A remembrance of past mercies is very profitable to us. National mercies ought not to be forgotten, and personal favours should always be fresh in our memory. Alas! the old proverb is only too true, "Bread that is eaten is soon forgotten." So is it even with the bread which God gives us; we eat it, yet soon forget the hand that fed us. Let it not be so with us.

9—11. *And when they forgat the* LORD *their God, he sold them into the hand of Sisera, captain of the host of Hazor, and into the hand of the Philistines, and into the hand of the king of Moab, and they fought against them. And they cried unto the* LORD, *and said, We have sinned, because we have forsaken the* LORD, *and have served Baalim and Ashtaroth: but now deliver us out of the hand of our enemies, and we will serve thee. And the* LORD *sent Jerubbaal, and Bedan, and Jephthah, and Samuel, and delivered you out of the hand of your enemies on every side, and ye dwelled safe.*

They oft transgressed, and were as often afflicted; but whenever they returned to the Lord with their confession of sin, and again sought his mercy, he was always quick to deliver them. Let us profit by their experience. Have we brought ourselves into trouble through sin? Have we wandered and backslidden, and are our hearts therefore heavy? Let us return unto the Lord, and confess our sin, for he hath not cast us away. He will turn again at the voice of our cry; he will forgive us, and graciously receive us unto himself again.

12, 13. *And when ye saw that Nahash the king of the children of Ammon came against you, ye said unto me, Nay; but a king shall reign over us: when the LORD your God was your king. Now therefore behold the king whom ye have chosen, and whom ye have desired! and, behold, the LORD hath set a king over you.*

"He has consented to your request, though it was a foolish one." Remember, brethren, it is not every answer to prayer that is a token of God's favour. If our prayers are very foolish, and even if there is sin in them, God may sometimes give us what we ask in order to show us our folly, and make us smart for having offered such a prayer. Though, under God's government, they had been most highly privileged, they must needs have a king, like the nations which were not so favoured. "So now," says Samuel, "God has given you this king, so do your best with him." Samuel had a hopeful spirit; and he hoped that, though the circumstances were not as he would have wished them to be, yet that the people might do well after all.

14—17. *If ye will fear the LORD, and serve him, and obey his voice, and not rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then shall both ye and also the king that reigneth over you continue following the LORD your God. But if ye will not obey the voice of the LORD, but rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then shall the hand of the LORD be against you, as it was against your fathers. Now therefore stand and see this great thing, which the LORD will do before your eyes. Is it not wheat harvest to-day? I will call unto the LORD, and he shall send thunder and rain; that ye may perceive and see that your wickedness is great, which ye have done in the sight of the LORD, in asking you a king.*

This was to be a token to them that Samuel was God's prophet. On a previous occasion, in answer to his prayer, God had thundered against the Philistines; but, this time, his thunder was his voice against Israel.

In reading the Bible, we must always remember that it was not written in England, but in Palestine. Wheat harvest there takes place about the month of May, when the weather is usually settled, and such things as thunder and rain are almost unknown. It was extraordinary, therefore, as we speak of "a bolt out of the blue."

18, 19. *So Samuel called unto the LORD; and the LORD sent thunder and rain that day: and all the people greatly feared the LORD and Samuel. And all the people said unto Samuel, Pray for thy servants unto the LORD thy God, that we die not: for we have added unto all our sins this evil, to ask us a king.*

That thunderstorm was a powerful preacher to them, and the rain drops, that fell so copiously, brought the tear drops into their eyes. The phenomena of nature frequently impress men with a sense of God's power, and prostrate them before him.

20—22. *And Samuel said unto the people, Fear not: ye have done all this wickedness: yet turn not aside from following the LORD, but serve the LORD with all your heart; and turn ye not aside: for then should ye go after vain things, which cannot profit nor deliver; for they are vain. For the LORD will not forsake his people for his great name's sake: because it hath pleased the LORD to make you his people.*

How gently the old prophet speaks! What a change from the pealing thunder to this gracious voice! It seems like the clear shining after rain.

23—25. *Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and the right way: Only fear the LORD, and serve him in truth with all your heart: for consider how great things he hath done for you. But if ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed, both ye and your king.*

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THE SOURCE.

A Sermon

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C. H. SPURGEON,

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"The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water?"—John iv. 11.

THIS was a sensible and very important question. May the Holy Spirit graciously enable us to answer it aright! Our Lord's great object, in his talk with this woman at the well, was not to convince her of his oratorical power, for he spoke to her as simply as one would speak to a child. Many sermons are far too elaborate in their construction; they are evidently intended to display the preacher's own powers. But if we would imitate the Lord Jesus Christ, the true Prince of preachers, we should not strain after effect; and we should get a better effect, without any straining, by taking the living truth, and telling out, as simply as possible, the story of salvation.

Jesus Christ's sole object, in talking with this woman, was to bring her to salvation. That is also my object with regard to my hearers and readers; and, my dear unconverted friend, if you shall agree with me in that object, and shall breathe the prayer, "Lord, help the preacher so to speak to my soul that I may find Christ," there will be joy among the angels of heaven over sinners repenting and returning unto the Lord.

Our Saviour, in seeking to win this woman to himself, was completely successful. He hit the mark he aimed at; his shot struck the very centre of the target. Only one sermon was preached to her;—nay, it was hardly a sermon,—just a brief talk with her, and the woman received the living word. Alas! there are some of you, who have had a great many affectionate talks, from godly mothers and fathers, or from earnest ministers, teachers, or other Christian friends; but, so far, they have not been so successful as Jesus of Nazareth was on this occasion. You have heard many sermons;—you cannot tell how many you have heard, and some of them have

produced some effect upon you; but, up to the present, you have not been slain by the sword of the Spirit, nor quickened by Jesus Christ the Life-giver. I hope the Lord is about to do what has not been done before; and, with the accumulated responsibility upon you of having heard the gospel so often in vain, I think you should the more earnestly breathe the prayer to God, "O Lord, let this be the effectual time of speaking to me! Call me as thou didst the Samaritan woman. While the preacher is speaking, and I am listening to thy Word as it shall be proclaimed, graciously grant that Jesus may be revealed to my soul, and that he may say to me, 'I that speak unto thee am he.'" If you are brought to pray that prayer from your heart, I believe that it will be answered, and so, as I have already said, there will be joy in the presence of the angels of God over you. Our Lord aimed at this woman's conversion by simply instructing her, and also by bringing the truth home to her conscience. Let us see whether, if we do the same thing, trusting in the same Spirit that anointed our Master, similar results will follow here as followed at the well of Sychar.

First, then, I am going *to expound the teaching which preceded the woman's question, and suggested it;* then, secondly, I will *answer the question;* and then, thirdly, I will *draw some inferences from it.*

I. First, then, WHAT WAS IT THAT LED THIS WOMAN TO ASK OUR SAVIOUR THE QUESTION, "From whence then hast thou that living water?"

Jesus Christ had told her that, had she known him, she would have asked of him, and he would have given her living water. There was Jacob's well; they were both of them close to it, and they could look down into it. There was some water in it, but the well of Sychar was not a well of "living water." You probably know that the expression which is translated "living water" refers to water that springs up from a fountain; but the well of Sychar is not a well of that kind. The water in it is surface water, the gatherings of the neighbouring hills; land water, not spring water. Jesus Christ seemed to draw his illustration from that fact: "The water in that well *runs* into it, and is drawn out from it; but if you had asked me, I would have given you water that bubbles up,—water that is full of life, very different from this well-water,—water from the great deep that 'coucheth beneath." You know the difference between those two sorts of water. I have illustrated it before by the two wells which are in the courtyard of the Doge's palace at Venice. One of them has its copper or bronze margin worn with holes cut by the string by which little cans are let down to fetch up the water that wells up from the spring; it is so precious because it springs up from a living fountain. The other well, which looks very like the one I have mentioned, is not worn at all. Very few people care to draw from it; and the reason is, because it is simply filled with water brought into the city. It is flat, dead water, not "living water" at all. So Jesus Christ had used this illustration in speaking with the woman: "You have come here, to draw this water out of the well,—the mere rain water that runs into Jacob's well; but if you had asked of me, I would have given

you water of a far better sort,—water with life in it,—water which would be life unto you,—water which would be in you a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

The woman caught the figure, though she did not at first understand its spiritual meaning. Its spiritual meaning is this,—that *Jesus Christ has grace in himself,—grace to give to sinners,—grace to give to those who ask him for it;* for he said to the woman, "Thou wouldest have asked of *him*, and *he* would have given thee living water." In the Lord Jesus Christ, then, there is a deep fount of grace always springing up within himself. "It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell;" and it does dwell in him. To him, the Spirit has been given without measure. There is no meagre supply of grace in Christ. He hath an abundance, and I might almost say a redundance for ever springing up within himself. And this he has on purpose to give away. He has it not for himself, for he needs it not. Almighty and ever-blessed as he is by nature, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and the Spirit, he needs no grace for himself; but what he has is all for him to give away. He came into this world to open up channels by which he might distribute all his grace to thirsty souls.

And he gives it all away for the asking,—almighty grace to be had for the asking! No human merit can demand it, and no performance of any earthly ceremony is required in order to obtain it. Here it is in a nutshell: "*Thou* wouldest have *asked* . . . , and *he* would have *given*." "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God;" and if any man lack pardon, let him do the same. If any man lack anything that is essential to his purity, to his happiness, to his present life, or to his future life, it is stored up in Christ, and it can be had from him for the asking. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"

The teaching of the text, to you unconverted people, is this:—if ever you are saved, it must be by the grace of God. That grace is in Jesus Christ; it has been put into Jesus Christ, not because he needs it himself, but that he may distribute it; and he does distribute it, and whosoever asketh it of him receiveth it from him; "for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." And when you receive this grace, it will remain in you. It will not be like ordinary water, which you drink, and which then is done with, but it will abide in you. It shall turn into a well of living water; inside your soul there shall be an ever-springing well of life, which never shall cease to flow, either in summer or in winter, and which, in glory, shall enable you to understand what that eternal life was which Jesus gave to you, and of which he said to his Father, "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."

II. Now, secondly, I am going TO ANSWER THE QUESTION THAT THIS WOMAN PUT TO CHRIST.

Her question was, "'From whence then hast thou that living water?' How didst thou come to have it? If thou hast living

water, how is it that thou hast it? It is not in that well; and even if it were there, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: 'from whence then hast thou that living water?'" What an important question this is to put in a spiritual sense! Lord Jesus, we hear that thou hast an abundance of grace, treasured up in thee, which thou dost freely distribute amongst those who ask thee for it; but how camest thou by it? How is it that thou hast this grace? In what way did it come to be stored up in thee? "From whence then hast thou that living water?" While I am asking this question, I pray every unconverted one, who desires to find peace with God, to say to himself or herself, "I am now to hear how it is that Christ can save; I am now to learn why it is that he is the Giver of grace to the guilty." Perhaps, dear friend, while you are listening, you may see something in Christ which you never saw before, and faith may spring up in your soul almost insensibly to yourself; and ere you go out of this place, you may be able to say, "I cannot fully explain this great mystery, but I know sufficient of the Lord Jesus Christ to believe in him; I cannot but believe in him now that I see how it is that he is so mighty to save."

The first answer to the question, "From whence then hast thou that living water?" is this:—*He has it in his very nature.* Jesus Christ is able to save because he is divine. "With God, all things are possible;" and Jesus Christ is God, so all things are possible with him. "God is love;" and Jesus Christ is God, so he, too, is love. God possesseth all things; and Christ is God, so he hath all things freely to distribute among the sons of men. Jesus of Nazareth, as he sat on the well at Sychar, seemed to that woman, at first, to be only an ordinary Jew, and she wondered that he, being a Jew, should speak to her, a woman of Samaria. But veiled under the form of that Son of Mary, there was God himself made flesh, and dwelling among men. Oh, it is glorious to think that he, who has come to redeem you, is no mere man, but over all God blessed for ever! If a man were to tell me that he was going to take the world upon his shoulders, I should distrust his power to bear such a burden, even though he were as strong as Samson. But Jesus Christ, the Son of God, can not only bear up this world, but the entire universe, upon his hand, for all fulness of power dwells in him. If any man were to say that he would take upon himself the sins of the whole world, I should be even more diffident than if he proposed to play the part of Atlas, and to bear the world upon his shoulders. But when Jesus, who counted it not robbery to be equal with God, takes upon himself the form of a servant, and yet has the iniquity of us all laid upon him, I can understand how he can bear the tremendous load, for he bears the earth's huge pillars up, and spreads the heavens abroad. When we think of Jesus as divine, nothing seems to be impossible to him. The strength of sin, which is the law, is not too great for him who made the law, and kept it, too. The sting of death, which is sin, shall certainly not be able to destroy, or even to resist, the almighty power of him who hath the keys of death and of hell.

If you commit your soul, my dear friend, to the keeping of a man, or of an angel, you will have made a fatal mistake. If all the angels in heaven were to band themselves together to save a soul, and were to ask me to be the soul that they would seek to save, I would have nothing to do with them. Nobody who is less than Deity can save sinners, and Jesus is "mighty to save" because he is God as well as man. This is a basis upon which the soul's hope may well be founded and established for ever. If the interposing Mediator be indeed "very God of very God,"—and he is,—we see whence he hath this living water, and we can come to him with the utmost confidence, knowing that he is able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by him.

Another answer to the Samaritan woman's question is that Christ has this living water *by the divine purpose and appointment.* It was the divine plan that Jesus Christ, the second Person of the blessed Trinity in Unity, should be appointed to be the treasury of grace for all his elect ones. In the council chamber of eternity, it was ordained that the Son of God should, in due time, come into this world, and take upon himself our nature, and also our sin, and he was set apart, in the eternal purpose, so to do; and, in the proclamation of the gospel, that decree of the Lord is published to the sons of men. The Lord God hath set forth his Son Jesus as the one propitiation for the sins of men; he is authorized by God to be a Saviour, and he comes here, by divine appointment, to bestow upon us the blessings of his grace. When an ambassador comes to this land from another country, he brings credentials to prove that he is duly accredited by the authority that he represents, and our Lord Jesus Christ comes to men with credentials which prove that he was appointed by God to this service before all worlds were made, and that he will be divinely sustained in that appointment till time shall be no more; and then, having completed his mediatorial work, he will surrender the Kingdom to his Father, and God shall be All-in-all. So now, as Mediator, he stands, appointed by the Most High, to distribute the blessings of his grace, which is the living water of which our text speaks.

To me, this truth is inconceivably sweet; for, when I trust in Jesus Christ to save me, I rejoice to know that he is no amateur saviour, who has come on his own authority, and at his own bidding. But, behold, the Father himself hath sent him. He is the Messias, the Sent One, the Anointed, the Christ of God. God must accept his Son, for he sent him into the world for this very purpose. If I bring to God the blood of Jesus as the atonement for my sin, he must accept it, for he himself ordained it as the medium of reconciliation. My blessed Saviour, if I hide in thee, I cannot be either dragged or driven from thee, for God has set thee apart to be the City of Refuge to which my poor soul may flee for protection and shelter. God hath appointed Jesus "to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." It seems to me that these are two grand answers to the question of the Samaritan woman, "From whence then hast thou

that living water?"—first, from his own natural and essential Deity; and, secondly, as the Mediator appointed and sustained by the eternal Father.

But, thirdly, the Lord Jesus could give a further answer to the woman's question by referring to *the anointing which he had received from the Holy Spirit.* On the day of his baptism in the Jordan, the Spirit descended upon him, like a dove, and abode upon him. He could truly say, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." He was anointed by the Holy Spirit for the work of distributing the living water to the sons and daughters of men. He was God's CHRISTOS,—God's "Anointed." Those are two very precious titles which are often put together,—Jesus Christ,—the anointed Saviour; they describe both his office and his qualification for that office. Well, then, behold Jesus Christ, with the fulness of the Spirit abiding upon him, coming into the world endowed with all those divine gifts which, as Mediator, he needed, that he might be able to carry out the work which the Lord had of old appointed him to do. The Spirit of God is still with him, and he gives the Spirit to those who seek him. This, then, is the third answer to the woman's question, "From whence then hast thou that living water?" He has it because the Spirit of God is upon him.

There is another answer, which may convince some, who have not been comforted or enlightened by the previous ones; it could not have been given to the woman, at the time she put the question, except by way of anticipation; but we can now say that Christ has this living water *because his redeeming work is finished.* He had it, virtually, during his life on earth, in foresight of the work which he had undertaken to finish. Hence it was that multitudes of souls went to heaven long before Christ had paid the ransom for them, his pledge and promise being a guarantee that the great deed would surely be accomplished. Think of this, that the Son of God, whom the holy angels worshipped without ceasing, should have come hither in the form of a babe, who nestled in a woman's arms,—that he might save us! Oh, let the joy-bells ring as we think of God in human flesh! Does not the thought of Christ's incarnation bring hope to the lost? May not sinners see, in it, how the living water finds a channel in which it can flow down to them in the person of the incarnate God,—"Emmanuel, God with us"? "Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." He lived for thirty years, in this world, a quiet, humble life, working out a righteousness for all his people, fulfilling all the relationships of life into which he was brought; and so, when he came to be baptized, he openly revealed the work that he was doing all his life, namely, fulfilling all righteousness. Throughout the whole of his earthly career, he was living

for us, and working for us, and the merit of his unique life stands to the credit of all who believe in him. At last, the time came for him to die, for "without shedding of blood there is no remission." The living water could not come to us unless Christ's heart was opened to let it out. He must give his life a ransom for many, or else there could never be any ransomed souls. You know the sad, sad story. Jesus goes forth from the place where he had instituted the memorial supper, he enters Gethsemane's garden, utters a series of agonizing prayers, in the course of which a shower of his precious blood falls upon the earth where he kneels. He rises from the ground, meets his betrayer, and receives his cruel traitor kiss. He thrusts aside the sword with which his too eager disciple would have defended him; and he is led like a lamb to the slaughter; and like a sheep dumb before her shearers, he opens not his mouth to answer his accusers. He gives his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to them that pluck out the hair; he hides not his face from shame and spitting. Yea, though he is Lord of all, he voluntarily yields himself up to a felon's death, and gives up his immaculate body, which had never been stained by sin, to be pierced with the nails, and every bone to be dislocated by the jar as the cross is first lifted up, and then hurled down into its place. He hangs in the burning sun, parched with fever. He has no friend or comforter, for even God has forsaken him while he is bearing his people's sin, and his enemies mock and laugh at his agonies. He yields up his soul unto death without a murmuring word. He knew that the price of pardon was his blood, but his pity ne'er withdrew; and, until he could say, "It is finished," he held on to life. When it was finished, he submitted himself to death, and the Lord of glory was laid in the new tomb in the garden. Now, if you ask me, "From whence, then, has Jesus of Nazareth, God incarnate, that living water?" I answer in three words,—"Gethsemane, Gabbatha, Golgotha." Put these three together;—the place where he sweat great drops of blood, the place where he was scourged, and the place where he died,—and you can comprehend whence he hath this living water.

Another answer to the woman's question, "From whence then hast thou that living water?" is that he hath it in *the reward which his Father promised to him for his mediatorial work:* "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities." God's only-begotten and well-beloved Son is to receive a full reward for all that he endured, and all that he has so far received of his Father is not for himself, for he needs nothing; but he has received it that he may distribute it amongst the rebellious children of men. The psalmist truly sang, "Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them." And this is whence he has that living water. Poor soul, groping in the dark, and trying to believe in Jesus, ought not this to enable thee to believe in him? Christ has lived, and loved, and bled, and died, and now there is

a reward due to him which can only be met by the salvation of all for whom he died. See, then, how he has the living water, and come and trust him to give it to you freely.

There is one other answer to the woman's question, "From whence then hast thou that living water?" It is this. *Because of his intercession at his Father's right hand in glory.* Jesus, the God-man, the Mediator between God and men, ever liveth to make intercession for us: "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Look at him, my brethren, the risen Christ at God's right hand, if you can; see him standing there, in his robes of glory and beauty, for he is no longer a sacrificing Priest, for his one sacrifice, in which he offered up himself, is finished for ever. Now he has put on the royal robes of the High Priest, for he is both a Prince and a Priest; and there he stands, with our names engraven upon his breastplate, each glittering jewel dear to the eyes of God. Wherever he moves, the bells and the pomegranates upon his glorious garments pour forth sweet music in the ear of the Most High, for Christ is altogether lovely in the eyes of his Father, and he is ever dear to the heart of his Father. There he stands as the great representative Man, fully acceptable to God;—nay more, dearly beloved of God; and, for his sake, God looks upon all who are in him with infinite love and divine complacency. Some of you may know what it is to have a beloved son away in America or Australia for many years. By-and-by, he comes home, and he brings his wife. You have never seen her, but you love her for his sake. Possibly, he also brings home a dozen children. Well, that is a large addition to your family, but you welcome them all for your boy's sake, do you not? I am sure you do; and you seem to see his image in them all. All who belong to him are dear to you for his sake. So, the ever-blessed God looks with unspeakable love upon the whole family of Christ, because of the love which he bears to their covenant Head, and Lord, and Surety. This eternal life that is in him,—this boundless love that God gives to him,—this intercessory power that he hath with the Father, and that he uses on our behalf,—this is whence he hath that living water.

III. Now may God the Holy Spirit specially aid us while we briefly notice, in the third place, THE INFERENCES TO BE DRAWN FROM THIS TRUTH.

If this is whence Christ hath this living water, then *he is able still to bless the children of men.* If he had received grace from some temporary source of supply, it would have been exhausted long ago; but, since he received it from his own divine nature, from the purpose and plan of God, from the anointing of the Holy Spirit, from his own finished work, and from his ever-living power and infinite merit, since all these fountains of grace are as full to-day as ever they were, and since they always will be just as full, from the same source the stream of grace will continue to flow. If the deeps, from which a well draws its water, are always the same, then depend upon it, the supply in the well will be always the same. If, therefore, the great deeps from which Christ draws

the living water cannot be supposed to be lessened, the living water is in him, at this moment, as much as it was eighteen hundred years ago.

The remembrance of this truth should bring consolation to the soul of anyone who may have said, "I wish that I had lived long ago, when Christ was upon this earth in visible form." You should not speak so, for you may as readily receive grace from Christ as did the woman of Samaria. The very words, which Jesus used to that poor fallen creature, he also addresses to thee, "If thou knewest the gift of God, . . . thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." Ask, and thou shalt have, even as she asked and received. It is abundantly clear that there is an ample supply of grace stored up in Christ Jesus for all who trust him.

It is equally clear that *he needs nothing from us.* If he had drawn the living water out of the well at Sychar, he would have wanted to borrow the woman's water-pot; he would have said, "Now, mistress, you must lend me your rope, and your water-pot, for, otherwise, I cannot get at the water in the well." But, as the living water comes only from himself, he needs nobody's water-pot or rope. This is a very important matter, because you, sinners, will persist in bringing your water-pots and your ropes to help Christ. You want to aid the Lord Jesus Christ, in some way or other, in his work of saving you. "Ah!" you say, "I know that he is a Saviour, but then I must"—Well, what "must" you do? "Oh!" says one, "I must do this," and another says, "I must do that." I will tell you all the "must" there is about your case; you must be willing to be nothing, and let Christ be everything. You must be the emptiness, and he must be the fulness. You must be the poverty, and he must be the riches. You must be the poor miserable beggar, and he must be your great Enricher, your All-in-all. That is all that is needed.

Then, once more, since this living water comes to Christ from his essential Deity and all the other grand things of which I have spoken, *it is not exhausted at this present time.* There is an abiding fulness in Christ since the living water comes thus to him. Millions of happy spirits are now in heaven, who have drunk of this living water; but Christ is just as able to save millions upon millions more; and your sins cannot exhaust Christ's fulness. I remember, when the thirst of my soul was so strong, by reason of my acute sense of sin, that I compared myself to behemoth, of whom the Lord said to Job, "He trusteth that he can draw up Jordan into his mouth." Well, now, if your soul's thirst is so great that it will take more than Jordan to satisfy you, and the rivers of Abana and Pharpar after that, and Kishon after that, and the Mediterranean sea after that, and the Pacific and Atlantic oceans after all those,—if you could drink up all that is good in the whole universe, and still thirst for more, if you will receive grace from Christ, he will fill you to the full, yet he will still be just as full of grace as he ever was.

There was a sailor, who, if I remember the story rightly, once

called at Lubbock's bank, to cash his pay notes. I think he was to draw £50, so he said to the clerk, "I don't like to be hard on anybody. As you have to pay out all this money, I will take ten pounds now, and I will call again, another day, for some more, as I don't want to break you up." Of course, you may imagine how they smiled at the simplicity of the man who thought that he might break the bank by drawing out such an enormous sum of money as fifty pounds all at once! You smile at the illustration, yet that is just exactly how many sinners treat the Lord Jesus Christ. They seem to think it is too much to expect to receive from him the full and free forgiveness of all their sins; they imagine that it is too much for Christ to give all at once; but they do not know that the Lord Jesus Christ has already pardoned enough sinners to make heaven as bright with redeemed spirits as the sky is with stars, and yet that he has as much pardoning mercy left as ever he had. After you draw from a perennial fountain as much water as you need, it still springs up as copiously as ever; so is it with the living water which is stored up in Christ, and you may have it, poor thirsty soul, as much as you need. I will not underestimate the greatness of your sin; it is indeed enormous; but since Christ has borne it, in his own body, on the tree, he knows its weight, and all about it; and, as soon as you trust in him, you will realize that he has for ever put it all away.

So I think that the final inference to be drawn is that *we should all take of this living water, which Christ so freely gives.* "Ah!" says one, "I bless God that I drank of it years ago." Never mind, brother; never mind, sister; come and drink of it again. Keep on receiving Jesus Christ again and again, continually looking unto him as the Author and Finisher of your faith. Let us all go to him, saints and sinners, saved and unsaved, this very moment. May the Holy Spirit draw us, and may we all, as one man, say, "I give myself up to thee, O Saviour, to save me; and I trust thee to cleanse me from all my sin, and to present me at last, faultless, before the presence of thy glory with exceeding joy. I am nothing, and I have nothing that I can bring to thee to merit thine esteem. I am nothing but a mass of sin and misery,—not even feeling my sin as I ought to feel it. Look upon me, O Saviour, in love and mercy, and give me the grace to drink of the living water this very hour, if I never drank of it before; and if I did drink of it long ago, let it spring up within me just now, and may I be conscious of its power, to my own comfort and to thy praise and glory!" If this be your prayer, my brothers and sisters, God will bless you, and we shall meet in heaven, by his grace, still to drink of the living water for ever and ever, and to his blessed name we will ascribe all the praise and glory for our salvation, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

JOHN IV. 1—34.

Verses 1—4. *When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, (Though Jesus himself*

baptized not, but his disciples,) he left Judæa, and departed again into Galilee. And he must needs go through Samaria.

And, surely, not only because it was the more convenient way, but because he had designs of love for some souls there that his Father had given him. There is many a needs-be in divine providence because of the needs-be of divine grace.

5, 6. *Then cometh he to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour.*

Wearied, and needing rest, yet there was no rest for him, except that he found his sweetest rest in winning immortal souls unto himself.

7. *There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink.*

That is practically what Jesus still says to the sons and daughters of men: "Give me to drink." He asks for your love, for your trust, for your confidence. It is his meat and drink to bless your souls, and to give you the blessing that you need, and it is a refreshment to his spirit when you give him the opportunity of thus blessing you.

8. *(For his disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat.)*

It was a great mercy that the disciples were out of the way just then; had they been there, they might have tried to keep this poor woman from speaking to the Saviour; and, sometimes, brethren, it may be well for us to be laid aside. God may do more good without our presence than with it; who can tell?

9, 10. *Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans. Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.*

See, then, the evil of spiritual ignorance, and see also how the chain of grace works, "If thou knewest . . . , thou wouldest have asked . . . , and he would have given." When God gives the knowledge of Christ to the soul, then there comes the spirit of prayer, and then consequent blessing.

11, 12. *The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water? Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle?*

She took the Saviour's figure literally; and there are still many who cannot see the spiritual meaning of God's Word, and so run their heads against the hard stern letter which killeth, instead of seeking and finding the inner living spirit which giveth life. These are the people who build their hopes of salvation upon outward ordinances, and who impute saving power to "sacraments." Would God that they knew better!

13—15. *Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life. The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw.*

She was still unable to see the inner meaning of the Saviour's words; the outward sense still held her fast. She needed to have her conscience aroused, for that would prove to be the way into her heart. Christ has different doors for entering into different people's souls. Into some, he enters by the understanding; into many, by the affections. To some, he

comes by the way of fear; to another, by that of hope; and to this woman he came by way of her conscience.

16—19. *Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither. The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband: for thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly. The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet.*

Something had come home to her conscience through what the Saviour said to her, so she began to speak about what he was, not about what she herself was. This often happens when the preacher is enabled, by divine grace, to come home to the conscience. The result is, that the hearer says, "What a wonderful preacher he is!" But that will do no good; that is not the point at which we are aiming. "The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet;" and off she goes, at a tangent, to enquire about various forms of religious observance. Evil liver as she was, she was still a person who wished to be regarded as a religious woman; and it is strange how often a certain religiousness will flourish even in the most depraved heart,—not true godliness, however. So she propounded this difficulty to the Saviour:—

20. *Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.*

"There are so many sects, can you tell me which is the right one?" That is the question which men often put to us when we begin to touch their consciences.

21. *Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.*

This question is of very temporary interest. The hour cometh, when neither of these places, nor yet any other, shall be considered sacred.

22—24. *Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.*

No longer is any consecrated building necessary to true worship; indeed, no building can be consecrated. No longer are we to be confined to canonical hours. No longer is God to be sought with the sensuousness of sweet music or of fragrant incense; but he is to be sought with the heart, and soul, and spirit.

25, 26. *The woman saith unto him. I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he.*

This great truth burst upon her with all the force of a divine revelation, and faith came with the information. The words that had gone before had prepared her to expect this manifestation of Christ to her soul.

27—34. *And upon this came his disciples, and marvelled that he talked with the woman: yet no man said, What seekest thou? or, Why talkest thou with her? The woman then left her water-pot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men, Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ? Then they went out of the city, and came unto him. In the mean while his disciples prayed him, saying, Master, eat. But he said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of. Therefore said the disciples one to another, Hath any man brought him ought to eat? Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.*

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE SEARCH-WARRANT.

A Sermon

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C. H. SPURGEON,

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"But there are some of you that believe not."—John vi. 64.

ARE there indeed? Yes; he that searcheth the hearts saith so. Then it is high time for us to enquire, "What is it to believe in Christ? What is it to believe to the saving of the soul?" It is not merely to consider the gospel to be true. It is not simply to endorse the doctrine that Christ is God. Those who hold a sound creed may be destitute of precious faith, and those who are able to defend the Divinity of Christ with admirable scholarship may, nevertheless, be without God in the world. To believe in Christ includes much more than a religious profession. It is so to believe the gospel as to forsake all other beliefs for the possession of its blessed hope; it is to imbibe the spirit of the Word while you accept the letter of its pure teaching; or, in other words, it is to come to Jesus, and to prove, in your own souls, his power to save.

Just as the faith of Abraham led him to leave his kindred, and his father's house, under the guardian care of Jehovah, so saving faith leads a man to leave his self-sufficiency, with all the carnal pursuits and ambitions that encircled, like a farmstead, his natural and primitive abode, and to go forth, led by Jesus Christ, not knowing whither he goes. Just as faith led the harlot Rahab to anticipate the doom of Jericho, to hang the scarlet line in her window, and then to rest securely in her house, though the town walls, upon which it was built, were shaking, so, by faith, the sinner comes to the blood of sprinkling, hangs the promise of redemption in the window of his soul, and though he feels himself to be, naturally, no better than others, yet he rests secure because that scarlet line is there, and he is safe. Or, to use another figure, just as the Hebrew householder slew the lamb, dipped the bunch of hyssop in its blood, sprinkled it upon the lintel and the two side posts of his house, and then calmly ate of the Passover supper, though he knew that the destroying angel was flying through the

land of Egypt, and though, peradventure, he could even hear the shrieks of the dying and the wailing of the bereaved, yet he remained quietly in his house, knowing that, though he might be the guiltiest of men, the blood secured his safety according to the promise of God.

To believe in Jesus, then, is to trust for our soul's salvation to what Jesus has done for us, to prove what he is doing in us, and to rely entirely upon his promise to save us even to the end. It is to drop from the giddy elevation where we stand on the rotten timbers of self-righteousness, and to fall into the omnipotent arms of him who stands ready to receive us; it is to tear off the rags of our own spinning, that we may be clothed upon with the righteousness which is from heaven. Faith is the reverse of sight. It is to believe that we are saved when sin tells us that we are lost. It is to believe that Christ has cleansed us when we still feel defilement within. It is to believe that we shall see his face in glory when clouds and darkness enshroud our path, and doubts and fears distress our heart. This is the faith which saves the soul.

We are not saved by faith itself as a meritorious work. There is no merit in believing in God; and even if there were, it could not save us, since salvation by merit has been once for all solemnly excluded. Nor does faith save us as an efficient cause. Faith is the channel of salvation, not the fountain and source of it. Hence faith, though it saves, never boasts. He that boasts hath not faith; and he that hath faith can say, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." When the poor man, who was bitten by the fiery serpent, looked to the brazen serpent upon the pole, it was his eye that saved him; yet it was not the merit of looking, nor was it his eye that was the efficient cause of his cure; but all the glory of it was to be given to God who had ordained that the brazen serpent should be the means of healing to all who looked to it. So, faith is the eye with which we look to Christ, yet it has neither merit nor efficacy in itself; all the merit and efficacy lie in the precious blood of him to whom we look.

Again, faith is an empty hand; yea, it is the filthy hand of the leprous sinner, and Christ puts his mercy into that black hand. Is there any merit in the hand? God forbid! Is there any efficiency to save in the hand? Oh, no, my brethren; the hand which gives must have the glory, not the hand which takes. He who bestows the blessing must have the honour of it, not the faith by which we receive the blessing from him.

Now, having thus spoken upon what faith is, and having tried to show you its peculiar position in the work of salvation, I am solemnly reminded, by our text, that "there are some of you that believe not." The context shows that these words were spoken by Christ to his disciples. They were gathered around him, and he was addressing them; some of them had murmured because what he said to them was too "hard" for them to receive, and the Lord Jesus, being able to read their hearts, could say to them, "There are some of you that believe not;" and the inspired Evangelist

adds, "For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him." I am going to speak, first, about *those whose unbelief is secret;* and, secondly, about *those who are known to us to be unbelievers.*

I. First, THERE ARE SOME WHOSE UNBELIEF IS SECRET, it is known only to Christ.

If you had looked upon those disciples of Christ, you would have judged that they had received the gift of eternal life; you would have said, "God forbid that I should condemn any of those men who have come out from an ungodly generation, and have professed to be followers of the Prophet of Nazareth!" Although it would be wrong for us to judge our fellow-creatures, Jesus judged his disciples, and judged them rightly, for he can penetrate even to the heart, he can discern the secret thoughts, and intents, and motives of all men, and the day is coming when he will finally judge the whole race of mankind. His eye even now pierces through the hypocrite's disguise, but his hand shall tear it away when he shall say to those who cry to him, "Lord! Lord!"—"Verily I say unto you, I never knew you; depart from me, ye workers of iniquity." We know not the hollowness of their pretence, but Christ knows all about it; and if the Holy Spirit shall help us, we may be enabled to show it to themselves. Oh, that it may be so, even now, that they may stand with their souls revealed, and their consciences convicted, and that they may now seek for faith, seeing that they have it not!

What reason for alarm and for heart-searching there is here, for it is to be feared that, *even in the ministry, there are some who have not faith!* Ay, brethren, there have been, in all ages, men who have worn the robes of God's ambassadors, but who have not themselves been at peace with him. It is a solemn and dreadful fact that there have been men who have broken the bread at the Lord's table, and who have been leaders in God's Israel, yet who, notwithstanding that, have had neither part nor lot in the matter. Brethren in the ministry, and young men, who occasionally go out to preach the Word, and who are hoping, by-and-by, to have a settled pastorate, let us ask ourselves this question,—Is it not possible that we, although preachers of the Word, may yet be without faith? Are we seeking to teach to others what we have not ourselves learned? Are we only like scaffolds, used in the building of Christ's Church, yet not ourselves part of the spiritual structure; or like Noah's labourers, who helped to build the ark, yet were themselves drowned by the great deluge? Are we like Elijah's ravens, which brought him bread and meat from Ahab's table, yet themselves remained unclean birds of evil omen? Let us seriously question ourselves thus, for God has sometimes done good works by bad men; yet this has not saved the men themselves, even as it was with Judas, who worked miracles as the other apostles did, and preached as they did, yet who, nevertheless, was "a son of perdition", who went unto "his own place" among the lost.

Further, is it not possible that *there are some, in the other offices of the church, who have not faith?* Men and brethren, let me speak to you who are the fathers in Israel. Though but young myself,

yet, as God's servant, delivering his message, I speak to you with authority. Is it not possible that you may serve tables, as deacons of the church, and yet that you may be yourself an intruder at Christ's table? You may be an elder and an overseer of others, and yet have to say, "They made me the keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept." It is solemn work to be made a watcher over the souls of men; but what must be our position if, after watching over others, our own soul should still be in the gall of bitterness and the bonds of iniquity? "I speak as unto wise men; judge ye what I say." Office-bearing and the choice of the church cannot guarantee your salvation.

And as this is true of some ministers, and of some church-officers, *it may be true of others who are engaged in various works of piety.* I thank God that we have here many Sabbath-school teachers, tract-distributors, street-preachers;—in fact, I hope that there are very few persons, in this church, who are not regularly engaged in doing good in one way or other. If there be, among them, any who do not believe, I am happy to say that I do not know them; yet it is possible, dear friend, that you are teaching a Sunday-school class, although yourself needing to become as a little child before you can enter the kingdom of heaven? May you not be distributing messages of mercy to others, in the streets, or from door to door, and yet be yourself in need of that mercy? If that is your sad case, you are like a man with a leprous hand dealing out medicine to the sick. Take care, Christian workers, that, in this day of activity, when there is so much to do, you do not neglect the personal act of faith which unites your soul to Christ. See to this vital and all-important matter. Make clean the outside of the cup and platter, so far as you can, but see that the inside is not full of hypocrisy. However active you are in the Lord's service, I pray that your exclusive self-examination may be as earnest as your expansive zeal. May you be as much concerned to be yourselves saved as to proclaim salvation to others!

Now I speak *to the church-members in general.* I thank God that he is adding to this church every day Sometimes, I hear a whisper, from one side, that those of us, whose business it is to examine candidates for church-fellowship, are too severe in our judgment of them; and, on the other side, there are some who say that we are not searching enough. Brethren, it is enough for me, and my fellow-labourers in Christ, when we can say that, with singleness of spirit, and not with eye service, as men-pleasers, we have sought to serve God in this matter. I do verily believe that, for the most part, what we have bound on earth has been bound in heaven, and what we have loosed on earth has been loosed in heaven. At any rate, this I can say, if we have erred in any case, it has been neither by favour nor by prejudice; but we have sought, after lifting up our hearts to heaven, to give a righteous judgment in every instance. Yet, with all the care that may be exercised, there is not, beneath the cope of heaven, a single church that is perfect. Some of you, who are now here, are members of this church, and some are members of other churches, yet it is almost certain that

"there are some of you that believe not." I do not profess to be able to separate the tares from the wheat, but Jesus can do it, he knows those among you who have no faith. You may talk about faith, and yet not really have it yourselves. You may have a great gift in prayer, and yet not have faith. You may be an acceptable preacher, and yet not have faith. You may walk uprightly before your fellow-men, and yet not have faith. You may be a generous subscriber to every holy work, and yet not have faith. How nearly a man may be a Christian, and yet be lost, after all! The counterfeit may be made to look so like the genuine that men may look at it again, and again, and again, and yet may pronounce the real to be counterfeit, and the false to be genuine. The Lord grant that, if there are, in this congregation, any who have a name to live, and yet are dead, they may be aroused to a sense of their true condition before God ere it is too late, and that Christ may give them life! Brethren, I do not know that, at the present moment, I have any doubt of my own personal interest in Christ; yet I do know that it is a very solemn thing to be too sure, and that it is a damnable thing to be presumptuous concerning such a matter. There will be times, with all of us, when it will do us good to sit down, and seriously ask, "Are these things so, or are they not?" Let us dig down to the very foundations of our faith, and see what it is upon which we are building for eternity. There will be times when all our past experience will be blown to shreds, like the sail of the mariner in a great gale. There will be times when our strongest evidence will snap like a mast broken by the fury of the storm. There will be times when all our comforts and joys will go like hen-coops washed overboard from a labouring ship. Oh, what a blessed thing it is, at such a time as that, to cast our great bower anchor into the sea, and calmly to sing,—

> "In every high and stormy gale,
> My anchor holds within the veil."

When anyone can say,—

> "His oath, his covenant, and his blood,
> Support me in the sinking flood;"—

he may feel that he is everlastingly secure, and that Jesus is indeed his Saviour. May the Holy Spirit enable you to judge,—for we cannot,—whether you have this saving faith or not!

II. Now, in the second place, I am to speak about THOSE WHO ARE KNOWN TO US AS UNBELIEVERS.

First, there is a very pleasing class of persons here, who say, "*We have no faith, but we are very anxious to have it.*" I bless God for you, dear friends, and I wish that we had thousands like you. You feel your need of Christ, you long to be saved, you hate sin, you hate self-righteousness; yet you have no faith. There are certain questions that each of you often puts to us. First, "May I believe in Christ?" I answer,—Of course you may, because Christ bids you do so; and what he bids you do, you may do. "But am I fit to believe in him?" No fitness is required. "But

am I the person who may believe in Jesus?" There is no special person indicated, for the gospel runs on this wise, and it is to be preached to every creature under heaven, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." As to the question whether you may believe in Jesus, whoever you are, I say,—Yes, certainly; come and welcome, for Christ has said, "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Your next question probably is, "Can I believe?" I do not know, but I should think that you can. I will put a few questions to you,—Can you believe that Christ is God? "Yes." Can you believe anything that God says? "Yes." You can believe, then, for Christ said it,—and Christ is God,—that he came to seek and to save that which is lost, and you know that you are lost. God says, through his servant, the apostle Paul, "that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners;" and you know that you are a sinner, therefore he came into the world to save you. You can believe that, surely. I know many persons, who say that they cannot believe, when in truth they can, yet they do not know that they can. How is it, then, that there are still so many who believe not?

The chief reason is because they will not believe; they are too proud, they love their own righteousness too much, they think themselves too wise to submit to the righteousness of Christ. But you say, "Can *I* believe in Jesus?" I say rather,—Can *you?* I ask you the question. You who are black as hell, can you believe that Christ can save you? "Yes, sir," you say, "I can believe that." Can you believe that he is willing to save you,—good and gracious Christ that he is,—hanging on the cross, and bidding you trust him? "Oh, sir!" you say, "I cannot help believing that." Well, then, you have proved that you can believe, for you have done it already. I used to think that believing in Christ was some mysterious thing, and I could not make out what it was; but when I heard that it was just this, "Look unto me, and be ye saved," I found that the only reason why it was so hard was that it was so easy. If it had been a more difficult matter, then my proud spirit would have tried to accomplish it; but being so easy, my proud spirit would not do it. You remember why Naaman could not wash in the Jordan, as the prophet bade him; it was because he would not, his proud spirit would not let him. "I thought," said he;—that was where the mischief lay, for what right had he to think? "I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper. Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them, and be clean?" That is why he could not wash in the Jordan, because he would not, but persisted in asking questions, wanting to be wiser than God.

O tried heart, you may believe, and I think I may say that you can believe! God is true; you know that, and it cannot be hard to believe when you know that. Christ is able to save; you know he is, so it cannot be difficult to believe in him. Christ is willing to save; you know he is; then, is it hard for you to believe in him?

So I say that you can believe. May God bless you, and make you willing to believe; for, if he makes you willing, he will be sure to show you that you are able to believe.

The next class, without faith, is not one over which we can rejoice so much as over those who are anxious to have faith; I mean, *the despairing ones.* There are some souls that feel their sin to be very heavy. They have the gospel faithfully preached to them; but they are so proud that they will have it that Christ is not willing to save them, so they will not go to him. There is such a thing as proud humility, when a person feels a sort of self-conception of being base. "No," says he, "I cannot take the medicine, I am too sick." Now, that man is as much a suicide, spiritually, as though he took poison, or stabbed himself to death. God says that he is able to save you, but you say that he is not; you are lying in the very teeth of his promise, and charging him with falsehood. The apostle Paul, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, says that Christ is able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by him; yet you, in effect, say, "No, he is not." Why, you are imitating Satan, setting up your wisdom in the place of God's, instead of accepting God's Word as true.

I know that, when I first heard that Christ could save such a sinner as I was, I thought the news was too good to be true; but the Holy Spirit led me to trust in him, and then I proved that it was true. If you are a poor miserable beggar, and some good man here should say to you, "Come home with me, and I will give you a good situation; nay, more, I will take you into my home, and you shall be my son and heir;" you would say, "Well, I can hardly believe it, but I will go and see if it is true." I hope you will say to God, who has promised you far more than that, "Lord, I am as black a sinner as there is out of hell; but if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. Lord, do it; I give myself to thee." And if, poor despairing soul, you can say, "It is God with whom I have to deal, and he can do anything; it is a dying Saviour with whom I have to deal, and he must be willing to forgive; it is the risen Redeemer of whom I have to think, he can speak peace to my soul, and he will do so;"—if you can thus trust yourself with him, you will honour God, and you yourself will be saved.

But there is a larger class still, in perhaps greater danger; I mean, *the careless and thoughtless.* How many of you have come in here out of a curiosity which may never bring you here again? For you, death is a dream, heaven a fiction, and hell a bugbear. You know that the Word of God is true, yet you never trouble yourself about its warnings and threatenings. You say, "Let us eat, and drink, and enjoy ourselves;" but as for your immortal soul, you have left that to take care of itself as the ostrich leaves its eggs in the wilderness. Permit me, for a minute or two, to show you that I care for your soul even if you do not care for it yourself. Thou who art indifferent to thy spiritual welfare, remember that thou belongest to the most hopeless class under heaven. The profane are frequently converted, but the indifferent not so often. I have noticed that those, who get into the habit of

going first to one place of worship, and then to another, are very rarely saved; yet that is not because they oppose the truth. No; if they would do that, there might be some hope concerning them. When you are at home, take up a flint and an india-rubber ball of the same size; then take a hammer, and strike both of them with it. Every time you smite the ball, you make an impresion upon it, but it quickly returns to its original shape. When you hit the flint with the hammer, you may produce no impression for a time; but, by-and-by, after one of your blows, it is shivered to atoms. Many of you are like that india-rubber ball. Under the preaching of the gospel, you are interested, moved, affected, but the impression is never very deep, and you soon return to your original form. You are shallow with regard to heavenly things; we cannot get at your conscience, we cannot reach your heart,—would God that we could!

I pray you to remember, however, that there is a time coming when death will preach far more effectually to you than I can. I recollect a narrative of a young woman, a fair and lovely lady, whose mother was very proud of her. She had introduced her into all the fashionable circles of the city. Her dresses were always becoming, but also expensive, and even extravagant. She lived only to go to one party and another, and to one amusement and another. Her mother had not observed—for mothers do not like to notice such things,—that there had been a great paleness on her daughter's cheeks. A rapid decline set in, and, at last, to the mother's terror and the daughter's dismay, the doctor thought it his duty to say that it was impossible that she could live many weeks. Neither mother nor daughter had ever cared for ministers; religion would have stood in the way of their chosen pursuits, so they avoided it; but now the minister was sent for. He was an earnest, faithful servant of Christ; so, instead of striving to bolster her up with false hopes, he began to talk of death, and judgment, and eternity, and the wrath of God. The young woman deeply felt the force and the truth of his words, and said to her mother, "I cannot think what you have been doing with me. You have led me to believe that those fine dresses, and those parties and amusements, were all I had to live for; why did you not tell me I must die? Why did you not bid me prepare for eternity? O my mother, would that you had told me that I must soon leave this world, and enter the eternal state!" She begged them to bring out her last fineries, and she said, "Mother, I feel it is too late now, for I shall die; but hang those things up, and look at them, and never bring up another child as you have brought me up; and as for yourself, I charge you to think how soon you, too, must die."

So I say to all careless ones here,—Think of the grave to which you must come, sooner or later; think of your last hours, and of the only true preparation for them. While it is true of you now that you have no faith, may it not be true very long; but may you, even now, seek and find faith in the Lord Jesus Christ! For, remember that, not to believe in Christ is to be already exposed to the wrath of God. Not to believe in Christ is to be without salvation, and

already under condemnation. There are many who do not know what it is to have a present salvation; but I bless God that there are also many who do know what a present salvation is. Do you know what it is? Not long ago, I was asked this question, "Is it possible for a man to be saved now?" Possible? Possible? If it is not possible for him to be saved now, it is not possible for him to be saved at all; but the apostle Paul assures us that "now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation;" and no man should give sleep to his eyes, nor slumber to his eyelids, until he feels and knows that this present salvation is really his. Oh, what peace it gives to know that you are now forgiven, now blessed, now saved! Oh, how sweet it is to be able to say that God is my Father, that I am his child, and that he will keep me in perfect safety, and bring me to be for ever where he is! Oh, the delights of this present salvation! It is better than a king's throne; it is better than a prince's riches. Present salvation,—it is heaven on earth; it is the antepast of the peace of immortality. Heaven on earth can only be known by those who are saved, and who know that they are saved. May that be your case and mine, beloved! Christ's own words are, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." May God bless us all with the true belief which is eternal life to all who possess it, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

LUKE XII. 1—32.

The teaching of our Lord, in this chapter, has very much to do with Christianity in connection with this present life, and its cares and troubles. God has nowhere promised us exemption from affliction and trial. Indeed, it has been said, with much truth, that the Old Testament promise was one of prosperity, but that the New Testament promise is one of tribulation. You may rest assured that, if it had been best for us to be taken away to heaven directly we were converted, the Lord would have done it, and that, as he has not done so, there are wise reasons why he keeps his people here for a while. The gold must go through the fire ere it has its place in the king's crown, and the wheat must be exposed to the winnowing fan ere it can be taken into the heavenly garner.

Verse 1. *In the mean time, when there were gathered together an innumerable multitude of people, insomuch that they trode one upon another, he began to say unto his disciples first of all, Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.*

Hypocrisy, however, of a kind that was calculated to spread, like leaven. If you know that a man is a hypocrite, you do not feel inclined to imitate him; but the Pharisees were such well-made hypocrites,—such excellent counterfeits,—that many people were tempted to imitate them. Our Lord teaches us, however, that it is no use being a hypocrite,—

2. *For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known.*

For many a day, the hypocrite's true character may not be discovered; but there is a day coming that will reveal all secrets; and woe unto the man whose sin is laid bare in that day!

3. *Therefore whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops.*

It would be well if we all lived in such a fashion that we should not be ashamed to have everything we did placarded on the very sky. I have heard of one who said that he would like to have a window in his heart, so that everybody might see what was going on. I think that, if I had such a window in my heart, I should like to have shutters to it; and I question whether any man really could wish to have his heart open to the gaze of all mankind. But, at least, let our lives be such that we should not be ashamed for the universal eye to be fixed upon them. If thou art ashamed to have any one of thine actions known, be ashamed to do it. If thou wouldst be ashamed to hear again what thou wast about to say, do not say it. Check thy tongue; be cautious and careful. Live ever as one who realizes God's omniscience. While one of the ancient orators was speaking, on one occasion, all his hearers went away with the exception of Plato; but he continued to speak as eloquently as ever, for he said that Plato was a sufficient audience for any man. So, if there be no eye but the eye of God looking upon thee, be just as careful as if thou wert in the street, surrounded by thy fellow-creatures; nay, be more careful because thou art in the presence of thy Creator.

4, 5. *And I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him.*

And how brave we shall be if we fear God! It is well put in that psalm which we sometimes sing,—

"Fear him, ye saints, and you will then
Have nothing else to fear."

This great filial fear will chase out all the little, mean, craven fears, for he who, in the Scriptural sense, fears God, can never be a coward in dealing with men.

6, 7. *Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows.*

God does not forget the sparrows, but he regards you with far greater interest and care, for he counts the very hairs of your head. He not only knows that there is such a person, but he knows the minutest details of your life and being. It is always a great comfort to remember that our Heavenly Father knows us. A dying man, who had been for many years a believer, had a minister at his bedside who said to him, "Don't you know Jesus?" "Yes, sir," he replied, "I do, but the ground of my comfort is that he knows me." And, surely, there is a great force in that truth. Your Heavenly Father knows you so completely that he has counted the hairs of your head: "Fear not therefore; ye are of more value than many sparrows."

8, 9. *Also I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God: but he that denieth me before men shall be denied before the angels of God.*

What courage this ought to give us! In company where the very name of Christ is kicked about like a football,—where everything is respected except true religion,—it is not always an easy thing to come forward, and say, "I also am his disciple." But if you will do this, you have Christ's pledge that he will own you before the angels of God. If you do not do so, but practically deny him by a shameful silence, you may reasonably expect that he also will deny you before the angels.

10. *And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be*

forgiven him: but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven.

This is one of the very difficult texts of Holy Scripture. We are told, in 1 John v. 16, that "there is a sin unto death," and I would have you very chary of ever daring to trifle with the Spirit of God, since sin against him is guarded with such special warnings. The flaming sword of divine vengeance seems to hang before the very name of the Holy Ghost; so, whatever you do, never trench upon his royal dignity, or blaspheme him in heart or by lip.

11. *And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates, and powers,—*

That is to say, the persecutors,—"when they bring you there, to be tried for your lives, as many have been in past ages, and some still are,"—

11, 12. *Take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say: for the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say.*

I have often been amazed and delighted with the remarkable answers which were given to bishops and priests by poor humble men and women who were on trial for their lives. Perhaps you remember that Anne Askew was asked, in order to entangle her in her speech, "What would become of a mouse if it ate the bread of the holy sacrament?" She said that was too deep a question for a poor woman like her to answer, and she begged the learned bishop on the bench to tell her what would become of the mouse; to which his lordship answered that it would be damned. Now, what reply could be given to that but the one Anne Askew gave, "Alack, poor mouse!" I do not know that anything better could have been said; and, on other occasions, there have been answers which have been deeply theological, and there have been some which have been wisely evasive and, also some full of weight, and others full of grace and truth, for the Holy Ghost has helped his saints, in time of persecution, to answer well those who have accused them.

13—17. *And one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me. And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you? And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of things which he possesseth. And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: and he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?*

There were empty cupboards in the houses of the poor, and there were hungry children to be filled; so this man need not have lacked room where he could bestow his fruits.

18—20. *And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool,—*

Which was the last thing he thought, he imagined that he was a very wise man: "But God said unto him, Thou fool,"—

20, 21. *This night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.*

Here our Saviour shows us the frail nature of the tenure upon which we hold all earthly goods, and how it is not worth while to make these the chief things of our life; for, while they may leave us, we are quite sure, by-and-by, to have to leave them.

22. *And he said unto his disciples, Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought—*

No undue, anxious thought, for such is the meaning of the word used here: "Take no thought"—

22—30. *For your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on. The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment. Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them: how much more are ye better than the fowls? And which of you with taking thought can add to his stature one cubit? If ye then be not able to do that thing which is least, why take ye thought for the rest? Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. If then God so clothe the grass, which is to day in the field, and to morrow is cast into the oven; how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith? And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things.*

So that, with the knowledge of his guarantees to you that you shall always have enough, what need have you to be careworn and anxious? I have often looked at birds in a cage, and thought of the happiness and carelessness of heart which they seem to exhibit; and yet, if you were to forget to give them water, or if you were to fail to give them seed, how soon they would die! Perhaps the little creature has not enough to last it more than one day, but it goes on singing its tune, and leaves all anxiety about the morrow to those whose business it is to care for it. You would be ashamed to let your bird starve; and will your Heavenly Father let you, who are not his birds, but his children, starve? Oh, no! "Your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things."

31, 32. *But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you. Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.*

He does not give you all that you would like to have, but he is going "to give you the kingdom." He gives the lesser gifts to others, but he is saving up the kingdom for you. Luther once said, "All the empires of the earth are only so much meal for God's swine; but the treasure is for his children. They may have less meal, but they shall have the eternal kingdom." Oh, how blessed are we if, by faith, we know that this is true concerning us: "It is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom"!

"The Sword and the Trowel" for September will contain a Communion Address by C. H. Spurgeon, and also one of his Addresses to the students of the Pastors' College; a Poem by Pastor Thomas Spurgeon, and also the substance of one of his week-night Sermons; a portrait and sketch of Pastor Frank Thompson, of Greenwich; another of Pastor J. W. Ewing's Talks with our Young People on Free Church Principles; also Articles by Dr. Cuyler, Pastors H. T. Spufford and F. A. Jackson, "Lawley," Mr. John A. Stooke, and other writers; and other interesting matter. (Passmore and Alabaster, price 3d.)

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

"TO YOU."

A Sermon

PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 1ST, 1904,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, July 9th, 1876.

"To you is the word of this salvation sent."—Acts xiii. 26.

My text must be read in the light of the 46th verse, or else I may be thought to be guilty of wresting it from its true meaning. Paul originally said, to the Jews and proselytes in the synagogue at Antioch in Pisidia, "To *you* is the word of this salvation sent." But they rejected the message; and, therefore, the apostle said to them, "It was necessary that the Word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles." So, if Paul were here now, he might, in addressing you, use the very same words which he used in addressing Israel of old, and say, "To *you* is the word of this salvation sent."

This fact furnishes us with a warning. Remember, brethren, that the gospel was first sent to Israel. Our Lord Jesus Christ himself confined his personal ministry almost entirely within the bounds of Palestine, and he bade his disciples begin the preaching of the gospel at Jerusalem; and such was the narrowness which naturally appertained to their nationality that it took a very long time to bring the most of the apostles to preach to any people beside the Jews. In this way, the Jews had a full opportunity of knowing the truth; but, because they were blinded by prejudice and sin, they could not see Christ. They judged themselves unworthy of everlasting life, so Paul and the rest of the apostles turned to the Gentiles. I would solemnly remind you, who now have the opportunity of hearing the gospel, that, if any nation shall be privileged to have the gospel sent to it, and yet shall continue to reject it, God may turn from that nation as readily as he turned from the Jews;—perhaps, even more readily than he turned from his ancient and peculiarly favoured people, Israel.

If, in this country, men and women continue to go after the idolatrous calves of Ritualism, or turn aside to the modern

Sadduceeism of scepticism, it may be that the Lord will remove the candlestick out of its place, and that the word of the gospel will be no longer sent to us. There are many nations, to which the gospel has scarcely been sent, at present, by the way of preaching it in their own tongue. They have not yet heard it; but they must do so, sooner or later. There are other countries, that were, at one time, the home of saints to whom Christ's name was known; yet they are now left in the darkness of Popery, or else Mohammedanism has brought the falsehoods of the crescent to take the place of the truth of the cross. Go to the ruins of the seven churches of Asia, and ask how it is that, as churches, we know nothing of them now; and learn, from their doom, not to trifle with the truth when it comes to you, nor to judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life; lest, perhaps, the messengers of peace should be sent to other lands, and the light of the gospel should no longer shine upon our highly favoured island.

And you, dear friend,—speaking personally to you as an individual rather than to the nation in general,—I pray you to take heed that, while you are able to hear the gospel, you also receive it; for it may be that, very soon, you will be unable to come to the house of prayer, or your lot may be cast where the gospel is not faithfully preached, and you may have to rue these blessed days in which the kingdom of God came so near to you, yet you did not enter in. Yea, you may lie a-dying, and you may have to lament the Sabbaths that you have wasted, and which never will come back to you. And oh, in the next world, with what regret you will have to look back upon the desecrated Sabbaths, and the neglected means of grace, and the despised invitations of God's ministers; and you will mourn that you judged yourself unworthy of everlasting life; and, therefore, have passed away into that place of woe where gospel invitations can never reach your ears. I am preaching with the hope that at least some of you may be saved from such a terrible doom as that, and that, this very hour, the gospel, which is sent to you, may be accepted by you.

There was a little boy, whom his mother noticed as always wonderfully attentive to the Word; he would frequently put his hand to his ear so as to catch every word from the preacher. She said to him, "John, why do you do that, my dear?" He replied, "Did you not hear the minister say, the other Sunday, that, if there was any part of the sermon that would be sure to do us good, the devil would try to cause a disturbance just then, so that we might not hear it So I am determined that, if there is anything that is likely to do me good, I will hear it." Any man, or woman, or child, who will hear like that, will not hear in vain; that is impossible.

I. My talk will be very simple, and not very long; and, first of all, I am going to answer the question, WHAT IS THIS WORD OF SALVATION, WHICH IS SENT TO US?

If you read the passage through, as we did just now, you will see that the word of salvation, which is sent to us, is *the testimony that Jesus Christ is the promised Saviour.* Paul showed that he was

of the seed of David, the Messiah whom God had promised to his people by the prophets. Jesus of Nazareth was the seed of the woman who was to bruise the old serpent's head, the One of whom the ancient seers spake so sweetly, and for whom the twelve tribes, instantly watching night and day, waited so long. This is the Messiah, the world's only hope, the one Redeemer, rightly called the King of the Jews, yet also the Saviour of all who believe in him.

What has this truth to do with you? Why, it has this to do with you,—that, *through this Man, is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins.* That same Jesus, who was the Son of God, took upon himself our human nature, lived in this world, and wrought righteousness; and when the due time came, he took upon himself the sins of all his people. The Lord laid them upon him, and he carried them up to the tree, and there, upon the tree, he bore the full penalty for all the transgressions of his people. The penalty for sin was death, so Jesus died; and Paul writes, by inspiration, "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Now, because Christ died in the room, and place, and stead of the ungodly, the forgiveness of sins is being preached, at this moment, in tens of thousands of places, all over the world. Whosoever believeth in Jesus Christ,—that is, simply trusts in him,—shall receive at once the forgiveness of all his sins,—a complete and irreversible forgiveness, by which the whole of his sin is blotted out, as when a man strikes his pen through the record of a debt, or writes below it, "Settled." All his sin is removed, as when the North wind drives away the cloud, and the sky is bright and clear. All his sin is removed, as when the fuller cleanses the filthy garment, and makes it white as snow. All his sin is removed for ever, "as far as the East is from the West." So, who can lay anything to the charge of the man whose sins Christ hath forgiven? This forgiveness is preached unto you, through the Man Christ Jesus, even to you who believe on his name.

The word of this salvation is *the proclamation of perfect salvation through the risen Redeemer*, for the apostle adds, "by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." That is to say, there were some sins which the law given to Moses never thought of forgiving, but there are no sins which Christ is either unable or unwilling to forgive. The law of Moses could not, in very deed, put away any sin; so, fresh sacrifices had to be continually offered under the Mosaic dispensation; "but this Man," whom we preach unto you, "after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God," having no need to present any more sacrifices. So that, if you believe on him, your sins shall be, not figuratively, but actually, put away for ever, and there shall remain to you no more consciousness of sin. Washed in the precious blood of Christ, you shall be whiter than snow, and shall enter into heaven, none daring to accuse you; for who shall accuse the man or woman whom Christ hath justified? This is the word of salvation, then, that is sent to you, my dear friends, as much as to those to whom Paul spoke. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." He

shall never perish, for he is forgiven by God, and is "accepted in the Beloved."

If there are any of you who do not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, it seems to me that you are like a ship that is derelict, left to the mercy of the winds and waves. O soul, yours is an unhappy condition for anyone to be in! Though as yet you are not destroyed, though as yet you are not in hell, it ought to be misery enough for a man to feel, "I am not under the direction of God; I have not Christ on board to be my Pilot." Stop, young woman; stay, young man; if that is the case with you. Go no further as you are, but ask the Lord to direct you from this time forth, and even for evermore. I stand here as a living witness to this fact, that it is the highest wisdom and happiness to trust in the Lord. I have relied upon him since I was fifteen years of age, and my only grief is that I did not trust him earlier; but since the hour that brought me to his feet, and enabled me to rest in him, he has been a good Helper, a sure Guide, and a blessed Friend to me; and, speaking from my own experience, I would entreat my brothers and sisters, who are younger than I am, to delay no longer, but to take my Heavenly Father to be their Guide also. May the Lord, the Holy Spirit, lead you to do so, this very hour, for Jesus Christ's sake!

II. Now let us pass on to a second question, which is, IN WHAT MANNER IS THIS GOSPEL SENT TO YOU? Let me have your ears and your hearts while I try to answer this important question, as the Holy Spirit shall guide me.

Well, first, it was sent to you, dear friend, whoever you may be, *in Christ's universal commission*, which he gave to his disciples, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." You are a creature, are you not? Then the gospel is to be preached to you. Paul wrote to Timothy, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." You are a sinner, are you not? Then, Christ came to save you, and this faithful saying is worthy of your acceptation. Our Lord Jesus Christ, in his last invitation in the Book of Revelation, says, "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Surely, "*whosoever will*" must include you, whosoever you may be, for you have a will, and you can come to Christ if you will.

> **"Let every mortal ear attend,**
> **And every heart rejoice;"—**

for, to everyone of woman born,—

> **"The trumpet of the gospel sounds**
> **With an inviting voice."**

Young or old, rich or poor, whosoever you may be, "to *you* is the word of this salvation sent" by him who bade us go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature, saying, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."

But it is also sent to you in another sense, for *the preaching of it has come actually to you.* The word of this salvation is sent to every creature under heaven, but the great mass of mankind have

not yet heard it. "How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent?" O Church of the living God, what a sin lies at thy door because they are not sent, and therefore the heathen do not hear, and hence they are not saved! But "to you" the preacher has come. You have heard the gospel; some of you, from your childhood. Can you recollect the time when you did not hear it? You say, sometimes, that it has been dinned into your ears until you are almost weary of it. When we come into the pulpit, we cannot tell you anything fresh; it is just the same old story that you have heard so long. "To you" the word of this salvation has been sent, and you have heard it, and know what it is.

Perhaps some of you may say to me, "Sir, we live in a place where the gospel is not preached. We have rank Ritualism in the parish church, and nothing but vapid intellectualism in all the Dissenting chapels." I am sorry if that is true; but look you here, sirs, you have all got this Bible, or you can all get it, and it will be a stern witness against every one of you, whether you hear the gospel preached or not. I suppose that a copy of the Bible is in almost every Englishman's house; I wonder whether there is one home in this land without it; there should not be. Well, then, as long as this invaluable preacher is with you,—as long as you can read the Word of God in your home, or in the field, or in the barn or the shop,—to you, indeed, is the word of this salvation sent.

Further, I believe that, *to some people, the gospel is sent in a yet more remarkable manner.* Possibly, the very fact that you are here, at this service, is one of the many instances in which the gospel has been sent to you. There was a young man, some years ago, who dishonoured his father's name in the village where he lived,—a scapegrace, as they called him,—and he ran away from his home, to go to a distant land. He came to London, and went on board a vessel, at the docks, expecting to sail. This was on a Saturday, but an accident occurred, and the ship was delayed, so he had a Sunday in London. He remembered that his father had often spoken of the Tabernacle, so he enquired the way, and came here, an utterly ungodly young man. Some months after, in a letter which he wrote to his home, his father was surprised to find that he was commencing to preach the gospel. He said that, on that Sunday night when he came here, the Lord met with him, and saved him. That was a blessed accident, that kept him from sailing on the Saturday, and that brought him here to listen to the gospel of Jesus. I never know who may be in my congregation. Ah, Tom, you scapegrace, I should not wonder, as you have come in here, if there was another wonder in store for you; and I trust that the Lord has sent the gospel to you by that singular providence which has brought you amongst us here. Out of this crowd, there must be some who are here under very peculiar circumstances. Some of you have come up from the country, and you have been persuaded by friends to come here. I do not know you, or aught about you; but my Lord does, and I trust that to you is the word of this salvation sent by

the very providence which has brought you here. A child takes the seed of a weed, when it is fully ripe, and blows upon it in sheer sport; away go the little parachutes, bearing through the air the seeds, and you may find that weed, over hill and dale, miles away. We, though not little children, take the divine seed of truth, and, with our anxious, but believing breath, we blow it abroad in this congregation. Where that seed may fall, we cannot tell; it may fall upon some stranger from the backwoods of Canada, or some brother from a great city of America, or some lonely worker who has been toiling far away in India, or on some at home, unknown to us, who, nevertheless, shall receive into good soil the seed, not of a weed, but of a precious flower of God; and if the world be not sooner brought to its close, even a thousand years hence there may be plants growing that can trace their spiritual parentage to the sowing of to-night. O young man, young woman, worker for Christ, thou canst never tell the infinite issues of what seemed so small a matter as the sowing of the good seed of the kingdom!

Sometimes, God sends the truth very specially home to the heart and conscience of the hearer by the singularity of the preacher's words; he has been guided by the Holy Spirit to paint the man's portrait to the life, and the man has been astounded at it. He has imagined that somebody must have informed the preacher about him; yet the speaker was, all the while, quite innocent of the man's affairs. "Why, the very words I have used," says he, "and the inmost thoughts of my heart were laid bare." Do you not know that this is one of the characteristics of the Word of God? Paul says that it "is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." If anything, in the preaching, at any time comes right home to you, as though the preacher looked right into you, and knew all about you, and reckoned you up as a boy does a sum in arithmetic on his slate, do not begin to wonder how it is done, but realize that, in this way, "to you is the word of this salvation sent." Oh, that the blessed Spirit would now arrest some of you;—laying his hand of grace upon your shoulder, as the sheriff's officer does when he arrests a man in the name of the law! May the Lord say to you, "Thou art my prisoner; thou shalt give thine heart to me. Make haste, and come down, and receive me into thine heart, for there I must dwell for ever."

> "Thus the eternal counsel ran,—
> 'Almighty grace, arrest that man;'"—

and when the eternal counsel so runs, and the divine decree so determines, so shall it be, for the Lord God is mighty to save, and none shall be able to withstand the power of his omnipotent grace.

III. Now, thirdly, I am going to keep to the same theme, yet to touch another string, while I reply to this question,—IN WHAT POSITION DOES THE GOSPEL PLACE A MAN WHEN IT COMES TO HIM?

The word of this salvation has been sent to many of you; in what position does it put you? Well, first, *in a position of great*

indebtedness, for you owe—I dare not try to calculate how much—to God for sending the gospel to you. That there should be a gospel to send to you,—that Christ should be given for you,—that his precious blood should be shed for you,—that there should be full and free forgiveness for you, though you feel that you are altogether undeserving of it,—all this makes up a stupendous favour from God. May you never dare to thrust it from you!

Then think of what you owe to the providence that has sent the gospel to you. For you, dear friends, apostles lived, and laboured, and suffered, and journeyed, that even to these distant isles of Britain the gospel of Jesus might be brought. For you, Reformers battled, bled, and died, that they might dispel the darkness of error and falsehood, and bring out the light of truth. For you, the martyrs suffered by thousands. Go you to Smithfield, and recall what your brave sires endured in order that their sons might have the gospel freely preached to them,—that very gospel which many of them despise. Wonderful have been the arrangements of divine providence to keep the light of truth burning in these lands.

The fact that, at this moment, you should be hearing the gospel preached, imposes a great obligation upon you. Who built this place, but generous Christian people, for the most part? Who are even now praying for your conversion, but God's servants who love you, and desire your eternal welfare? And, though I ask no thanks of you, yet does my soul yearn over you, poor soul, longing that you may find the Saviour as I have found him, and be as happy in him as I am. Well, you cannot be thought of and loved by others thus, and you cannot have the great wheels of divine providence continually revolving to bring the gospel to you; and, above all,—transcendently above all,—you cannot have the Lord Jesus Christ bleeding on Calvary's cross that there may be a gospel to preach to you, without your being put under very solemn obligations.

Further, the fact that you have the gospel sent to you *puts you into a very hopeful position*. I like to think about how many people are going to be saved every time the gospel is faithfully preached. It is not preached in vain; we deliver a message from God that never misses the mark at which he aimed it. We are sure that it is so, for we preach it in faith. We always expect to hear of sinners being saved, and we are never disappointed, nor shall we ever be while we can preach the truth with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. It is in his power that we preach, for we have sought the aid of the Holy Ghost, and thousands of you have sought his aid, too; and we have not sought in vain, so we look for conversions, and we, therefore, feel, dear friends, that you are in a hopeful condition, and we believe that many of you will be brought to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

But remember that—and here let me throw the whole emphasis of my soul into my message,—*you are put into a very responsible position*; for, if the gospel be thus brought to you, and you reject it, it will be a savour of death unto death to you. To every person to whom the word of this salvation comes, I have to say, in my

Master's name,—If thou art not saved by it, thou wilt have the blood of thy soul on thine own skirts. Woe unto you, if ye judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, and declare that ye will not have Christ to reign over you. Woe unto you if ye are disobedient, and stumble at this stumbling-stone. Ah, my dear hearers, it may seem but a trifling thing to you to hear the gospel; but this makes your position very different from what it would otherwise have been. The last great day will call me to account for every word I utter in delivering my Master's message, and it will also call each one of you to account for the reception or rejection of that message. You young men and young women, and you greybeards, will have to answer in that day, for the way you deal with the message now. You will not be able to excuse yourselves by saying, "We never did hear of pardon through the blood of Jesus." You will not be able to say, "The preacher did not proclaim the gospel to us. He gave us some fine language, and tried to play the orator, and finished off with a grand display of fireworks." You will never be able truthfully to say that. You know that there is nothing that I desire but to set Christ plainly before you, and to beseech, and entreat, and implore you to put your trust in him, for he is worthy of all the trust of your heart. So, have done with all other confidences, and with the love of sin, and lay hold on eternal life. But, whether ye will do so or not, be ye sure of this; to you is the word of this salvation sent, and the kingdom of God hath come nigh unto you.

IV. My last question is this. How are you going to treat the word of this salvation, now that it is sent to you?

First, *are any of you going to contradict it, and blaspheme it?* I trust not, although that sin is not an uncommon one nowadays; yet I most sincerely hope that I am not addressing one who blasphemes the Christ who died for sinners; such love as his ought to be free from blasphemy.

If you do not commit that sin, I fear that you may say, as so many others have said before you, "*I will think of it to-morrow.*" You do not really mean to think of it if you talk like that. When Felix said to Paul, "Go thy way for this time: when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee," what he meant was, "I do not want to listen to you any longer; you are a nuisance to me." Let me put the matter to you very plainly. You either love Christ or do not love him; which is it? That "to-morrow" plea is a false one. Satan has invented it in order that he may enable men to reject Christ, and yet flatter their souls with the notion that they are not doing so. Come, then; it may be that this is the last time you will ever be put to the question in this fashion. I have you, as it were, by the button-hole now; and, as the "Ancient Mariner" detained the wedding guest with his weird story, so would I hold you with this earnest personal pressure upon your heart and conscience. Do you mean to give Christ the go-by, or not? Remember that the bell shall toll ere long for you, and six feet of earth shall hold each one who comes to this Tabernacle, and who now sits and listens to the word of this salvation. Oh, whatever

you do, do not procrastinate! Say "No" if you mean "No." Say "Yes" if God the Holy Ghost enables you to say it; but do not say it, as some have too readily done, in certain revival services, without fully considering the matter. They have jumped into religion, and jump out again just as quickly. Like the rocky ground hearers, the seed quickly sprang up, and there was the green blade, but there was no depth of earth, so it soon withered away. Ask the Lord to plough your soul, and to break up the soil of your heart, that there may be roothold for the good seed of the kingdom.

And, in order to attain to this end, look right away from yourself to Jesus,—away from your repentings, and pleadings, and chapel-goings, and everything else, to Jesus only, with that true faith which has nothing to do with anything but the finished work of the Christ, who says, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." Do not trust to going into enquiry-rooms, and talking with earnest evangelists and other Christian workers. If you would be saved, your soul must come to grappling terms with Christ, and Christ must come to close terms with you; otherwise, you will be none the better for having heard the gospel. Indeed, the very fact that you have heard it will only increase your condemnation.

I think I hear someone say, "*Fain would I have him now! I would give my eyes to have him.*" Well, you need not give your eyes, or anything else; you may have him for nothing. I have told you the story of the vessel that was out at sea, as the captain thought, but he was out of his reckoning. They ran short of water, they had not a drop to drink; so at last they hailed a vessel, and speaking through the trumpet the captain cried, "We want water; we are perishing for want of water." Imagine his surprise when there came across the wave this reply, "Dip it up! You are in the river Amazon; it is fresh water all round you. Dip it up!" You perhaps think that you are out on the salt sea, but you are not; mercy is all round you. Throw your bucket overboard; dip it up! Trust in Jesus,—

> "Only trust him; only trust him;
> He will save you now,
> Only trust him; only trust him;
> He will save you now."

Do you ask, "What shall I do to be saved?" "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." That was Paul's answer to the question, and I cannot give you a better one. Believing does not take a week, or even a minute. Thy heart rests and relies on Christ, and Christ saves thy heart. See me leaning here, with all my weight, upon this platform rail. Lean so upon Christ, with all your weight. Have done with everything but Jesus; and when thou hast believed on him, then obey him by being baptized in his name, for he put belief and baptism together when he said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." So, accept the whole of the gospel, and keep to the command of Christ in every point, and then thou mayest look to the faithful God to fulfil his promise that thou shalt be saved. The Lord bless you, and save every one of you, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

ACTS XIII. 13—49.

Verse 13. *Now when Paul and his company loosed from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia: and John departing from them returned to Jerusalem*

"John"—that is, John Mark, as we see by chapter xv., verse 37.

14, 15. *But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and sat down. And after the reading of the law and the prophets the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on.*

The rulers of the synagogue had noticed them as strangers coming in, and perceived that they were Jews, probably by their wearing the same kind of garments as other Jews did.

16. *Then Paul stood up, and beckoning with his hand said, Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, give audience.*

Or, rather, "and ye Gentile proselytes, give audience."

17. *The God of this people of Israel chose our fathers, and exalted the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt, and with an high arm brought he them out of it.*

It is always well to begin with our hearers upon some common ground. So, wishing to persuade these people to receive the Lord Jesus as the promised Messiah, Paul begins with that which was always attractive to their ears,—the history of their nation, with a special mention of the peculiar favour which God had shown to his chosen people Israel in bringing them up out of the land of Egypt, and out of the house of bondage.

18—21. *And about the time of forty years suffered he their manners in the wilderness. And when he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Chanaan, he divided their land to them by lot. And after that he gave unto them judges about the space of four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet. And afterward they desired a king: and God gave unto them Saul the son of Cis, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, by the space of forty years.*

Do you not sometimes hear people speak disparagingly about certain parts of Scripture, and say, "Oh, that is the historical part"? Dear friends, never fall into the error of thinking less of one part of Scripture than of another, but remember that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works." This sermon, by Paul, is a rehearsal of Old Testament history; and he would not have spoken unprofitably; you may depend upon that. I would urge you to bear a protest against the method, which seems to be springing up nowadays, of saying, "That part of the Bible is for the Jews;" or "That particular Epistle"—for they speak thus even of the New Testament—"is not for us." It is all for us, and we are to seek to profit by every word of it, praying the Holy Spirit to apply it to our hearts.

22—25. *And when he had removed him, he raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will. Of this man's seed hath God according to his promise raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus: when John had first preached before his coming the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. And as John fulfilled his course, he said, Whom think ye that I am? I am not he. But, behold, there cometh one after me, whose shoes of his feet I am not worthy to loose.*

Paul went on with his narrative as far as the history of Saul and David, and so he came to great David's greater Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. He

had come by way of Old Testament history to Christ, and by way of John the Baptist to Christ; and that is how the preacher of the gospel should travel. On whatever road he journeys, his terminus must be Christ. The motto of all true servants of God must be, "We preach Christ, and him crucified." A sermon without Christ in it is like a loaf of bread without any flour in it. No Christ in your sermon, sir? Then go home, and never preach again until you have something worth preaching.

26. *Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God,*

Or, "is a proselyte to God."

26, 27. *To you is the word of this salvation sent. For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every sabbath day, they have fulfilled them in condemning him.*

See how easy it is for people to hear the Bible read, and yet to know very little about what it contains. They may have the lessons read every Sabbath day in their hearing, and yet they may not understand anything that is in them. They may even become themselves great readers of the Scriptures, yet not come to Christ, as it was with those to whom the Lord Jesus said, "Ye search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. But ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." If you are content with merely reading or hearing the Scriptures, and do not come to Christ himself, you stop short of salvation; yea, you stay in a position where you may be capable of the grossest sin, as were these people at Antioch in Pisidia.

28—37. *And though they found no cause of death in him, yet desired they Pilate that he should be slain. And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree, and laid him in a sepulchre. But God raised him from the dead: and he was seen many days of them which came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses unto the people. And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David. Wherefore he saith also in another psalm, Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption: but he, whom God raised again, saw no corruption.*

Note how Paul keeps to Scripture. An inspired apostle himself, yet he appeals to the Old Testament to support his case. That was the best argument he could possibly use with Jews; and, often, it will be the best that we can use with Gentiles.

38—42. *Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses. Beware therefore, lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the prophets; Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you. And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next sabbath.*

They did not mind hearing sermons twice in those days. We are not often asked to preach the same sermon over again. But these people wanted to know the truth; and, therefore, they asked to have it repeated. If our people will not receive the gospel the first time we preach it, we must tell

it to them over and over again. With the hammer of the Word, we must smite the same nail on the head again and again. Even if we do not utter the same words, there must ever be the same subject Sabbath by Sabbath, and week by week.

43—46. *Now when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas: who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God. And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God. But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming. Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold,*

Though Jews themselves, they could not bear to see the bigotry of their nation.

46. *And said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.*

And a blessed turning it has been for you, dear friends, and for me.

47—49. *For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth. And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region.*

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—488, 504, 521; AND FROM "SACRED SONGS AND SOLOS"—20.

THE SWORD AND THE TROWEL.

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Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

HOW GOD COMES TO MAN.

A Sermon

PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 8TH, 1904,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Thursday Evening, July 13th, 1876.

"And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden. And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou?"—Genesis iii. 8, 9.

"How will God come to us now that we have rebelled against him?" That is a question which must have greatly perplexed our first parents, and they may have said to one another, "Perhaps God will not come to us at all, and then we shall be orphans indeed. If spared to live on, we must continue to live without God and without hope in the world." It would have been the worst thing that could have happened to our race if God had left this planet to take its own course, and had said, concerning the people upon it, "I will leave them to their own way, for they are given over to idols."

But if he came to our first parents, in what way would he come? Surely, Adam and Eve must have feared that he would be accompanied by the angels of vengeance, to destroy them straight away, or, at any rate, to bind them in chains and fetters for ever. So they questioned among themselves, "Will he come; and if he does, will his coming involve the total destruction of the human race?" Their hearts must have been sorely perplexed within them while they were waiting to see what God would do to them as a punishment for the great sin they had committed. I believe they thought that he would come to them. They knew so much of his graciousness, from their past experience, that they felt sure that he would come; yet they also understood so much of his holy anger against sin that they must have been afraid of his coming; so they went and hid themselves amongst the trees of the garden, although every tree must have upbraided them for their disobedience, for every one of the trees would seem to say, "Why come you here? You have eaten of the fruit of the tree whereof you were forbidden to partake. You have broken your Maker's command, and his sentence of death has already gone out against you. When he comes, he will certainly come to

deal with you in judgment according to his faithful word; and when he does, what will become of you?" Every leaf, as it rustled, must have startled and alarmed them. The breath of the evening breeze, as it passed through the garden, must have filled them with fear and dread as to the doom awaiting them.

Now, "in the cool of the day," or, as the Hebrew has it, "in the wind of the evening," when the evening breeze was blowing through the garden, God came. It is difficult for us even to imagine how he revealed himself to our first parents. I suppose he condescended to take upon himself some visible form. It was "the voice of the Lord God" that they heard in the garden, and you know that it is the Word of God who has been pleased to make himself visible to us in human flesh. He may have assumed some form in which they could see him; otherwise, as a pure spirit, God could not have been recognized either by their ears or their eyes.

They heard his voice speaking as he walked in the garden in the cool of the day; and when he called unto Adam, albeit that there was righteous anger in the tone of his voice, yet his words were very calm and dignified, and, as far as they should be, even tender; for, while you may read the words thus, "*Adam*, where art thou?" you may also read them thus, "Where *art* thou, poor Adam, where *art* thou?" You may put a tone of pity into the words, and yet not misread them. So the Lord comes thus in gentleness in the cool of the day, and calls them to account; patiently listens to their wicked excuses, and then pronounces upon them a sentence, which, heavy though it be towards the serpent, and heavy though it be towards all who are not saved by the woman's wondrous Seed, yet has much mercy mingled with it in the promise that the Seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent,—a promise which must have shone in their sad and sinful souls as some bright particular star shines in the darkness of the night.

I learn, from this incident, that God will come to sinful men, sooner or later, and we may also learn, from the way in which he came to our first parents, how he is likely to come to us. His coming will be different to different men; but we gather, from this incident, that God will certainly come to guilty men, even if he waits till the cool of the day; and we also understand a little about the way in which he will ultimately come to all men.

Remember this, sinner, however far you may get away from God, you will have to come close to him one of these days. You may go and pluck the fruit that he forbids you to touch, and then you may go and hide yourself amongst the thick boughs of the trees in the garden, and think that you have concealed yourself; but you will have to come face to face with your Maker at some time or other. It may not be to-day, or to-morrow; it may not be until "the cool of the day" of time; nay, it may not be till time itself shall be no more; but, at last, you will have to confront your Maker. Like the comet, that flies far off from the sun, wandering into space for an altogether inconceivable distance, and yet has to come back again, however long the time its circuit takes, so you will have to come back to God, either willingly, repentingly, believingly, or

else unwillingly, and in chains, to receive your sentence of doom from the lips of the Almighty, whom you have provoked to anger by your sin. But God and you have to meet, as surely as you are now living here; at some time or other, each one of you must hear the voice of the Lord God saying to you, as he said to Adam, "Where art thou?"

Now, from this meeting between God and fallen man, I learn a few lessons, which I will pass on to you as the Holy Spirit shall enable me.

I. The first is this. When God did meet with fallen man, it was not until the cool of the day. This suggests to me GOD'S GREAT PATIENCE WITH THE GUILTY.

Whether Adam and Eve sinned in the early morning, or in the middle of the day, or toward evening, we do not know. It is not necessary that we should know this; but it is probable that the Lord God allowed an interval to intervene between the sin and the sentence. He was not in a hurry to come, because he could not come except in anger, to bring their sins home to them. You know how quick the tempers of some men are. If they are provoked, it is a word and a blow with them, for they have no patience. It is our littleness that makes us impatient. God is so great that he can endure far more than we can; and though our first parents' sin greatly provoked him,—and it is his glory that he is so holy that he cannot look upon iniquity without indignation,—yet he seemed to say to himself, "I must go and call these two creatures of mine to account for their sin; yet judgment is my strange work, it is mercy in which I delight. This morning, I drew back the curtains that had shielded them during the night, and poured the sunlight in upon them, not a second beyond the appointed time, and I was glad to do it; and, all day long, I have been showering mercies upon them, and the refreshing night-dews are already beginning to fall upon them. I will not go down to them till the latest possible moment. I will put it off till the cool of the day." God will do nothing in the heat of passion; everything shall be deliberate and calm, majestic and divine.

The fact that God did not come to question his sinful creatures till the cool of the day ought to teach us the greatness of his patience, and it should also teach us to be ourselves patient with others. How wondrously patient God has been with some of you who are here! You have lived many years, and enjoyed his mercies, yet you have scarcely thought about him. Certainly, you have not yielded your hearts to him; but he has not come to deal with you in judgment yet. He has waited twenty years for you young people; thirty years, forty years, for you middle-aged folk; fifty years, sixty years, for you who are getting past that period; seventy years, perhaps, or even eighty years he has been known to tarry, for "he delighteth in mercy," but he does not delight in judgment. Seventy years form a long life-day, yet many persons spend all that time in perpetrating fresh sin. Called to repentance over and over again, they only become the more impenitent through resisting the call of mercy. Favoured with blessings as many as the sands of the

sea-shore, they only prove themselves the more ungrateful by failing to appreciate all those blessings. It is wonderful that God is willing to wait till the cool of such a long, long day of life as seventy or eighty years make up. How patient, then, we ought to be with one another! Yet are you, parents, always patient with your children,—your young children who may not have willingly or consciously offended you? What patience you ought always to exercise towards them! And have you a like patience towards a friend or a brother who may use rough speech, and provoke you? Yet such your patience ought to be. Never should we take our brother by the throat, and say to him, "Pay me what thou owest," so long as we find God deliberately waiting till the cool of the day before he comes to those who have offended him, and even then uttering no more words of anger than should be uttered, and mingling even those words with mercy that has no bound.

II. The second thing that I gather from the Lord's coming to Adam and Eve in the cool of the day is HIS DIVINE CARE FOR THE GUILTY.

Though he did not come till the cool of the day, thus manifesting his patience, he did come then, thus manifesting his care for those who had sinned against him. He might have left them all night long;—all night long without their God,—all night long without him after they had done just what he had forbidden them to do;—all night long,—a sleepless night, a fearful night, a night that would have been haunted with a thousand fears;—all night long with this great battle trembling in the balance, with the great question of their punishment unsolved, and an indefinable dread of the future hanging over them. Many of you know that the trial of being kept in suspense is almost worse than any other trouble in the world. If a man knew that he had to be beheaded, it would be easier for him to die at once than to have to kneel with his neck on the block, and the gleaming axe uplifted above him, and not knowing when it might fall. Suspense is worse than death; we seem to feel a thousand deaths while we are kept in suspense of one. So God would not leave Adam and Eve in suspense through the whole night after they had sinned against him, but he came to them in the cool of the day.

There was this further reason why he came to them,—notwithstanding the fact that they had disobeyed him, and that he would have to punish them, he remembered that they were still his creatures. He seemed to be saying within himself, "What shall I do unto them? I must not utterly destroy them, but how can I save them? I must carry out my threatening, for my word is true; yet I must also see how I can spare them, for I am gracious, and my glory is to be increased by the display of my grace towards them." The Lord looked upon them as the appointed progenitors of his elect; and regarded Adam and Eve themselves also, let us hope, as his elect, whom he loved notwithstanding their sin, so he seemed to say, "I will not leave them all night without the promise which will brighten their gloom." It was only one promise; and, perhaps, it was not clearly understood by them; still, it was a

promise of God, even though it was spoken to the serpent, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." So, not one night were God's poor fallen creatures left without at least one star to gleam in the darkness for them, and thus he showed his care for them. And still, dear friends, though God is slow to anger, yet is he always ready to pardon, and very tender and compassionate even when he has to pass sentence upon the guilty. "He will not always chide; neither will he keep his anger for ever." You can see his care and consideration even for the most unworthy of us, because he has not cut us off in our sins. We are—

"Not in torments, not in hell."

We can see the marks of his goodness in the very garments on our backs and the food of which we partake by his bounty. Many of his gifts come, not merely to those who do not deserve them, but to those who deserve to be filled with the gall and wormwood of almighty wrath for ever.

III. Now, thirdly, I want to show you that, WHEN THE LORD DID COME, HE AFFORDED US A PATTERN OF HOW THE SPIRIT OF GOD COMES TO AROUSE THE CONSCIENCES OF MEN.

I have already said that, sooner or later, God will come to confront each one of us. I pray that, if he has never come to you, dear friend, in the way of awakening your conscience, and making you feel yourself a sinner, he may come to you very speedily. And when he does come, to arouse and awaken you, it is somewhat in this way.

First, *he comes seasonably:* "in the cool of the day." Adam's work was done, and Eve had no more to do until the next day. At that hour, they had been accustomed, in happier times, to sit down and rest. Now God comes to them, and the Spirit of God, when he comes to arouse men, generally visits them when they have a little time for quiet thought. You dropped in, and heard a sermon; the most of it slipped from your memory, but there were some few words that struck you so that you could not get rid of them. Perhaps, though, you thought no more about the message to which you had listened. Something else came in, and took off your attention. But, a little while after, you had to watch all night by the bedside of a sick friend; and then God came to you, and brought to your remembrance the words that you had forgotten. Or it may be that some texts of Scripture, which you learned when you were a child, began to speak to you throughout the watches of the night. Or, perhaps, you were going along a lone country road, or, it may be, that you were out at sea on a dark night, and the billows rolled heavily so that you could not sleep, and you even feared that you would be swallowed up by the raging sea. Then,—then came the voice of the Lord God speaking personally to you. When other voices were silenced, there was an opportunity for his voice to be heard.

Not only did the Lord come to Adam and Eve season-

ably, but *he spoke to Adam personally*, and said, "Where art thou?" One of the great mistakes in connection with all preaching is that so many hearers will persist in lending other people their ears. They hear a faithful gospel sermon, and then say, "That message would fit Neighbour So-and-so admirably. What a pity Mrs. So-and-so did not hear it! That would have been the very word for her." Yes; but when God comes to you, as he came to Adam and Eve,—and if you are not converted, I pray that he may,—the sermon he will deliver to you will be every word of it for yourself. He will say, "Adam," or "John," or "Mary," or whatever your name be, "where art *thou?*" The question will be addressed to yourself alone; it will have no relation to any of your neighbours, but to yourself alone. The question may take some such form as this: "Where are you? What have you been doing? What is your condition now? Will you now repent, or will you still go on in your sins?" Have not you, young man, had some such experience as this? You went to the theatre; but when you came home, you said that you had not enjoyed it, and that you wished you had not gone. You went to bed, but you could not sleep. It seemed as if God had come to wrestle with you, and to reason with you about your past life, bringing up one thing after another in which you have sinned against him. At all events, this is the way he deals with many; and if he deals thus with you, be thankful for it, and yield yourself up to him, and do not struggle against him. I am always glad when men cannot be happy in the world; for, as long as they can be, they will be. It is always a great mercy when they begin to be sick of the dainties of Egypt, for then we may lead them, by God's guidance, to seek after the milk and honey of the land of Canaan; but not till then. It is a great blessing when the Lord puts before you, personally, a true view of your own condition in his sight, and makes you look at it so earnestly, concentrating your whole thought upon it, so that you cannot even begin to think about others because you are compelled to examine your own selves, to see what your real condition is in relation to God.

When the Lord thus comes to men, and speaks personally with them, *he makes them realize their lost condition.* Do you not see that this is implied in the question, "Where art thou?" Adam was lost,—lost to God, lost to holiness, lost to happiness. God himself says, "Where art thou?" That was to let Adam know this, "I have lost thee, Adam; at one time, I could speak with thee as with a friend, but I cannot do so any longer. Thou wast my obedient child once, but thou art not so now; I have lost thee. Where art thou?" May God the Holy Spirit convince every unconverted person here that he or she is lost,—not only lost to themselves, and to heaven, and to holiness, and to happiness, but lost to God. It was God's lost ones of whom Christ so often spoke. He was himself the good Shepherd, who called together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, "Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost;" and he represents his Father saying of his son when he has come back to him, "'This my son was dead,'—

dead to me,—'and is alive again; he was lost,'—lost to me, 'and is found.'" The value of a soul to God, and God's sense of loss in the case of each individual soul, is something worth thinking over, and worth calculating, if it can be calculated. God makes man realize that he is lost by his own moanings and pleadings, even as he said to Adam, "Where art thou?"

You will observe, too, that the Lord not only came to Adam, and questioned him personally, but *he also made Adam answer him;* and if the Lord has, in this way, laid hold of any of you, talking with you in the cool of the day, and questioning you about your lost condition, he will make you confess your sin, and bring you to acknowledge that it was really your own. He will not leave you as Adam wanted to be left, namely, laying the blame for the disobedience upon Eve; and he will not leave you as Eve tried to be left, namely, passing the blame on to the devil. Before the Lord has done with you, he will bring you to this point, that you shall feel, and confess, and acknowledge that you are really guilty of your own sin, and that you must be punished for it. When he brings you down to that point, and you have nothing at all to say for yourself, then he will pardon you. I recollect well when the Lord brought me to my knees in this way, and emptied out all my self-righteousness and self-trust, until I felt that the hottest place in hell was my due desert, and that, if he saved everybody else, but did not save me, yet still he would be just and righteous, for I had no right to be saved. Then, when I was obliged to feel that it must be all of grace, or else there could be no salvation for me, then he spake tenderly and kindly unto me; but, at the first, there did not seem to be any tenderness or pity to my soul. There was the Lord coming to me, laying bare my sin, revealing to me my lost condition, and making me shiver and tremble, while I feared that the next thing he would say to me would be, "Depart from me, accursed one, into everlasting fire in hell;" instead of which, he said to me, in tones of wondrous love and graciousness, "I have put thee among my children; 'I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.'" Blessed be the name of the Lord, for ever and ever, for such amazing treatment as this meted out to the guilty and the lost.

IV. Now, fourthly, and very solemnly, I want to show you that THIS COMING OF THE LORD TO ADAM AND EVE IS ALSO PROPHETICAL OF THE WAY IN WHICH HE WILL COME AS A JUDGING SPIRIT TO THOSE WHO REJECT HIM AS AN AROUSING SPIRIT.

I have already reminded you, unconverted ones that, as surely as you live, you will have to come to close terms with God, like the rest of us. Sooner or later, you will have to know him, and to know that he knows you. There will be no way of escaping from an interview which will be most serious and most terrible for you. It will happen "in the cool of the day." I do not know when that may be. On my way to this service, I have called to see a young lady, to whom "the cool of the day" has come at five-and-twenty, or thirty years of age. Consumption has made her life-day a comparatively short one; but, blessed be God, his grace has made it

a very happy one; and she is not afraid, "in the cool of the day," to hear the voice of the Lord God calling her home. It is well that she is not afraid; but you, who have not believed in Jesus, will have to hear that same divine voice in the cool of your life's day. You may be spared to grow old; the strength of youth and of manhood will have gone, and you will begin to lean on your staff, and to feel that you have not the vigour you used to have, and that you cannot do such a hard day's work as you used to do, and you must not attempt to run up the hills as you once did. That will be "the cool of the day" to you, and then the Lord God will come in to you, and say, "Set thine house in order, for thou shalt die, and not live."

Sometimes that cool of the day comes to a man just when he would have liked it to be the heat of the day. He is making money, and his children are multiplying around him, so he wants to stop in this world a little longer. But that cannot be; he must go up to his bed, and he must lie there for so many days and nights, and then he must hear the voice of the Lord God as he begins to question him, and say, "Where art thou in relation to me? Hast thou loved me with all thine heart, and mind, and soul, and strength? Hast thou served me? Art thou reconciled to me through the death of my Son?" Such questions as these will come to us as surely as God made us, and we shall have to give an account of the deeds done in the body, whether they have been good or whether they have been evil. I pray you to think of these things, and not to say, "Ah! that will not happen just yet." That is more than any of us can tell; and let me remind you that life is very short even at the longest. I am especially appealing to those who are of my own age. Do not you, dear friends, find that, when you are between forty and fifty years of age, the weeks seem to be much shorter than they used to be when you were young? I therefore gather that, when our friends are seventy or eighty years of age, time must seem far shorter to them than it ever was before. I think that one reason why Jacob, when he was a hundred and thirty years old, said to Pharaoh, "Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been," was simply this,—that he was really such an old man, though not so old as his ancestors, that time seemed even shorter to him than it did to younger men. If that was so, then, I suppose that, the longer a man lives, the shorter would time appear to be. But, short or long, your share of it will soon be over, and you will be called upon to gather up your feet in the bed, and meet your fathers' God.

When that solemn and decisive hour comes, your interview with God will have to be a personal one. Sponsors will be of no use to anyone upon a dying bed. It will be of no avail, then, to call upon Christian friends to take a share of your burden. They will not be able to give you of their oil, for they have not enough grace for themselves and you. If you live and die without accepting the aid of the one Mediator between God and man, all these questions will have to be settled between your soul and God without anyone else coming between yourself and your Maker; and all this may happen

at any moment. This personal talk between God and your soul, at the end of your life, may be ordained to take place this very night; and I am sent, as a forerunner, just to give you this warning, so that you may not meet your God altogether by surprise, but may, at any rate, be invited and exhorted to be prepared for that great interview.

Whenever that interview takes place, God will deal with you in solemn earnestness,—personally bringing home your sin to you. You will be unable to deny it, for there will be One present, at that interview, who has seen it all, and the enquiries which he will make about the state of your soul will be very searching ones. He will not merely ask about one sin, but about all your sins. He will not only ask about your public life, but also about your private life; nor yet merely enquire about your doings, but about your sayings, and your willings, and your thinkings, and about your whole position in relation to himself, even as he asked Adam, "Where art thou?"

In imagination,—I pray that it may be only in imagination,—I see some of you die unsaved; and I see you as you pass into the next world unpardoned, and your soul realizes, for the first time, what was the experience of the rich man, of whom our Saviour said, "In hell he lifted up his eyes,"—as though he had been asleep before, and had only just awakened to his true condition. "He lifted up his eyes," and gazed all around, but he could see nothing except that which caused him dismay and horror; there was no trace of joy or hope, no track of ease or peace. Then, through the awful gloom, there came the sound of such questions as these, "Where are you, sinner? You were in a house of prayer a few weeks ago, and the preacher urged you to seek the Lord; but you procrastinated. Where are you now? You said that there was no such place as hell; but what do you say about it now? Where are you? You despised heaven, and refused Christ; where are you now?" What horror will seize the disembodied spirit as it reflects that it has brought itself into the condition of which it was warned, and from which it was invited to escape, but which it wilfully chose for itself, thus committing eternal suicide! The Lord in mercy preserve all of you from doing that! But if you will do it, then shall come forth from the lips of the justly offended God the irrevocable sentence, "Depart from me, ye cursed."

One of the most dreadful things in connection with this meeting of God with Adam was, that Adam had to answer the Lord's questions. The Lord said to him, "Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?" In our courts of law, we do not require men to answer questions which would incriminate them, but God does; and, at the last great day, the ungodly will be condemned on their own confession of guilt. While they are in this world, they put on a brazen face, and declare that they have done no wrong to anybody,—not even to God;—they pay their way, and they are as good as their neighbours, and better than the most of them; but all their brag and bravado will be gone at the day of judgment, and they will either stand speechless before God,—and by their speechlessness acknowledge their guiltiness in his

sight; or if they do speak, their vain excuses and apologies will but convict themselves. They will, out of their own mouths, condemn themselves, like that wicked and slothful servant, who was cast into the outer darkness where there was weeping and gnashing of teeth. God grant that we may never know, from sad personal experience, what that expression means!

V. Now, lastly, this meeting of God with Adam should lead us, who believe in Christ, to EXPECT TO MEET HIM ON THE MOST LOVING TERMS; for if, even when he came to question guilty Adam, and to pass sentence upon him, he did it so gently, and mingled with the thunder of his wrath the soft shower of his grace, when he gave the promise that "the Seed of the woman" should bruise the serpent's head, may we not expect him to meet us, by-and-by, on the most loving terms, if we are in that woman's Seed, and have been saved by Jesus Christ his Son?

He will come in the evening, brother and sister, when the day's work is done; so do not fret about the burden and heat of the day. The longest and hottest day will come to an end; you will not live here for ever. You will not always have to wear your fingers to the bone in trying to earn a scanty livelihood. You will not always have to look round upon your children, and wonder where the bread will be found with which to feed them. No; the days on earth cannot last for ever; and, with many of you, the sun has already climbed the hill, and begun to go down the other side, and "the cool of the day" will soon come. I can look upon a good many of you who have already reached that period. You have retired from active service, you have shaken off a good deal of business care, and now you are waiting for your Master to come to you. Rest assured that he will not forget you, for he has promised to come to you. You will hear his voice, before long, telling you that he is walking in the garden, and coming to you. Good old Rowland Hill, when he found himself getting very feeble, said, "I hope they have not forgotten poor old Rowley up there." But he knew that he was not forgotten, nor will you be, beloved.

You will hear your Lord's voice ere long; and the mercy is, that you will know it when you do hear it. Have you not often heard it before now? Many a time, in this house, you have heard his voice, and you have been glad. In the cool of many an evening, you have sat still, and communed with God. I like to see an old Christian woman, with her big Bible open, sitting by the hour together, and tracing with her finger the precious words of the Lord; eating them, digesting them, living on them, and finding them sweeter to her soul than honey or the droppings of the honeycomb to her taste. Well, then, as you have heard your Lord's voice, and know its tones so well, as you have been so long accustomed to hear it, you will not be astonished when you hear it in those last moments of your life's day. You will not run to hide yourself, as Adam and Eve did. You are covered with the robe of Christ's righteousness, so you have no nakedness to fear; and you may respond, "Didst thou ask, my Lord, 'Where art thou?' I answer, 'Here am I, for thou didst call me.' Didst thou ask where I am? I am hidden in thy Son;

I am 'accepted in the Beloved.' Didst thou say, 'Where art thou?' Here I stand, ready and waiting to be taken up by him, according to his promise that, where he is, there I shall be also, that I may behold his glory." Why, surely, beloved, as this is the case, you may even long for the evening to come when you shall hear his voice, and shall be up and away from this land of shadows and chilly night-dews, into that blest place where the glory burneth on for ever and ever, and the Lamb is the light thereof, and the days of your mourning shall be ended for ever.

God grant that you may all have a part and a lot in that glory, for his dear Son's sake! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

GENESIS III.

Verses 1—9. *Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the* LORD *God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons. And they heard the voice of the* LORD *God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the* LORD *God amongst the trees of the garden. And the* LORD *God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou?*

In tones of mingled pity and rebuke he asked, "Where art thou?"

10, 11. *And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself. And he said,—*

Note the calm majesty of every word. Here is no human passion, but divine dignity: "And he said,"—

11, 12. *Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat! And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.*

There is no sign of true confession here. Adam had been an unfallen creature a few hours before; but, now, he had broken the commandment of the Lord, and you can see how completely death was brought into his moral nature; for if it had not been so, he would have said "My God, I have sinned; canst thou and wilt thou forgive me?" But instead of doing so, he laid the blame for his sin upon his wife, which was an utterly mean action: "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat." He almost seemed to lay the blame upon God because he had given him the woman to be with him. He was guilty of unkindness to his wife and of blasphemy against his Maker, in seeking to escape from confessing the sin which he had committed. It is an ill sign with men when they cannot be brought frankly to acknowledge their wrong-doing.

13. *And the* LORD *God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done?*

Oh, that question! How far-reaching it is! By her action, and her husband's, the flood-gates had been pulled up, and the floods of sin had been let loose upon the world. They had struck a match, and set the world on fire with sin. And every one of our sins is essentially of the same nature, and has in it, substantially, the same mischief. Oh, that at any time when we have sinned, God would ask each one of us the question, "What is this that thou hast done?"

13. *And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.*

Still, you see, there is no confession of guilt, but only the attempt to push the blame off upon somebody else. The Lord God did not ask the serpent anything, for he knew that he was a liar, but he at once pronounced sentence upon him:—

14, 15. *And the* LORD *God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: and I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.*

And, now, there is no creature so degraded as that once bright angel, who is now the devil. He is always going about with serpentine wriggling, seeking to do more mischief. On his belly does he go, and still is dust his meat. That which is foul, material, carnal, he delights in. And his head is bruised, blessed be the name of the woman's promised Seed! The old serpent's head is bruised with a fatal bruising, while the wounded heel of our Saviour is the joy and delight of our hearts.

16, 17. *Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it; cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life;*

How obliquely fell the curse! Not, "Cursed *art thou*," as the Lord said to the serpent; but, "Cursed is the ground for thy sake."

18—21. *Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return. And Adam called his wife's name Eve: because she was the mother of all living. Unto Adam also and to his wife did the* LORD *God make coats of skins, and clothed them.*

Some creature had to die in order to provide them with garments, and you know who it is that died in order that we might be robed in his spotless righteousness. The Lamb of God has made for us a garment which covers our nakedness so that we are not afraid to stand even before the bar of God.

22—24. *And the* LORD *God said, Behold the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: therefore the* LORD *God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.*

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—397, 715.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

MOURNING AT THE CROSS.

A Sermon

PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 15TH, 1904,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, July 23rd, 1876.

"And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn."—Zechariah xii. 10.

NOTICE, in this verse, the very remarkable change of persons which you find in it; for you have, first, the first person, and then, the third: "They shall look upon *me* whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for *him*." It is the same Person who speaks in each case, and he is speaking concerning himself in both instances, so it is very remarkable that he should first say "*me*" and then say "*him*." What is this but another illustration of the Unity of the Godhead, and yet the Trinity of the adorable Persons in it. Notice that the One who, in this chapter, speaks of himself as "me" and "him", is none other than Jehovah, who made the heavens and the earth. Read the first verse: "The burden of the word of the Lord for Israel, saith the Lord, which stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him." The Creator of the heavens and the Creator of our spirit is the same Person who was pierced, and who says, "They shall look upon me." Yet there is a distinction, for we next read, "They shall mourn for *him*." Jesus Christ is God, and therefore so speaks of himself; yet is he also man, and therefore he is spoken of in the third person. There are other instances in which the divine and human in Christ Jesus are spoken of in a very remarkable manner. Turn, for instance, to the 50th chapter of the prophecy of Isaiah, and the 3rd verse: "I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering." No one but God could truly say that. Now turn to the 6th verse. I need not read the two intervening verses, but I will put the 3rd and the 6th together: "I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering . . . I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to

them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting." Can you realize the tremendous descent from the Godhead of him who clothes the heavens with blackness, and covers them with sackcloth, to the manhood of him who gave his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair? That is another illustration of the truth which is so singularly implied in our text, where we read that "Jehovah, which stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him," also says, "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced."

The next point I want you to notice is, the remarkable fact that Jesus Christ was crucified and pierced. Did it never strike you as being very singular that he should have been pierced? When the Jews brought Jesus to Pilate, he said to them, "Take ye him, and judge him according to your law." Would you not have supposed that the Jews, on hearing that, would at once have seized the opportunity of putting Christ to death according to their law? They accused Jesus of blasphemy, saying, "We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God." You know that the death ordained by the law of Moses for a blasphemer was by stoning; and, if I had not read any of the Old Testament prophecies, or the New Testament narrative, I should have felt morally certain that, when Pilate said, "Take ye him, and judge him according to your law," they would have taken him away, and stoned him to death; and I should have felt all the more certain that this would be the case because such was the animosity and hatred of the high priests especially against him that I should have thought that each one of them would have wanted to cast the first stone at him. But when he was sentenced to be crucified, the act of putting him to death was left to the Roman soldiers; and it is to me very surprising that, as the Jews had an opportunity of stoning him themselves, they did not avail themselves of it. Why was this? Why, because this ancient prophecy had said, "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced;" and because another still more ancient prophecy had said, "They pierced my hands and my feet." Therefore, Jesus Christ must die by crucifixion, and not by stoning.

There is another very notable thing in connection with this prophecy. The piercing of the hands and feet of Christ by the nails, might, perhaps, not seem sufficient to carry out the idea of the prophecy: "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced;" so, when our Lord hung upon the cross, when "he was dead already," as the Roman soldiers said when they came round to break the legs of the criminals to put an end to their sufferings, one of the soldiers, who had never read the Old Testament, and knew nothing about what was written there, probably just to gratify his heart's cruel instinct, takes his spear, and thrusts it into the heart of Christ, "and forthwith came there out blood and water." Now, if that had been done by someone who knew about the prophecy, it might have been said that there was some collusion to fulfil the prophetic Scriptures; but, as this Roman soldier was a barbarian, who did

not believe at all in the Jewish Scriptures, is it not a remarkable thing that this prophecy should have been fulfilled through his spear being thrust into the heart of Jesus Christ as he hung upon the cross? So now, as you read these words, "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced," adore the infinite wisdom of God, who was able to give the prophecy hundreds of years before its fulfilment in the most singular and literal manner.

Our text is a prophecy of the conversion of the Jews. They practically pierced the Saviour when they clamoured for his crucifixion, although Pilate tried to make a way for his escape, and the whole Jewish race has continued to endorse their dreadful deed. Most of the Jews who are now living still reject Christ with the utmost scorn and contempt. The very mention of his name often produces a manifestation of the greatest fury. They call him "the Nazarene." I would not like to mention the various opprobrious epithets by which our Lord is called by the Jews. I marvel not that they speak of him as they do; for, as they reckon him to be an impostor, it is but natural that they should heap scorn upon him. But, in doing so, they show that they accept the act and deed of their forefathers, and so his blood is upon them and upon their children, according to the terrible imprecation uttered to Pilate. But the day is coming when all this will be changed. Israel, still beloved of the Lord, the firstborn of all the nations, shall yet recognize Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of David, as being the true Messiah; and then there will come over Israel such a sorrow for having rejected the Messiah as no nation ever knew before. They will look back on all the hundreds or thousands of years during which they have been a people scattered and peeled, exiled from their own land, which was the glory of all lands; and they will then realize that what Isaiah and the other prophets wrote was plain and clear, and that they ought to have seen it before. Judicial blindness has happened unto them even until the present day, but they will see then, and there will never be any other Christians in the world such as they will make, so devout, and earnest, and so anxious to do the will of God in all things. Then will the Gentiles also be gathered in when Israel shall at last receive her King. The first Christian missionaries were of the seed of Abraham, and so shall the last and most successful ones be. God will graft in again the natural branches of the good olive tree, together with us who were, by nature, only wild olive trees, but who have, by grace, been grafted into the good olive tree. O glorious day when that comes to pass; may God send it soon, and may some of us, if not all, live to see it! Yet remember that, though it will be a day of great joy to the repentant Jews, it will also be to them a day of deep sorrow as they recall their long rejection of their dear Lord and Saviour.

I want to remind you that the way in which the Jews will come to Christ is just the way in which you and I also must come to him if we ever come to him at all. They are to come mourning for him, and sorrowing especially because they crucified him. But you and I also crucified him just as much as the Jews did, at least in a certain

sense, of which I am going to speak to you; and, consequently, when we come to Christ, we must come in just the same way that the Jews are to come to him. In fact, there is no difference, in this matter, between the Jews and the Gentiles. There is similar sin in each case, and the same Saviour; and when we come to Christ, it must be with the same kind of mourning and the same kind of faith with which Israel shall come in the days when God, in his mercy, shall gather her to himself.

I. My subject is to be—Evangelical sorrow, godly sorrow for sin; and my first remark concerning it is, that WHEREVER IT EXISTS, IT IS ALWAYS A CREATION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT: "I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace, and of supplications: . . . and they shall mourn." There never was any real godly sorrow, such as worketh repentance acceptable unto God, except that which was the result of the Holy Spirit's own work within the soul.

True evangelical repentance is *not produced by mere conscience*, however much the conscience may be aroused and instructed. The Spirit of God must operate upon the heart; otherwise, the natural conscience cannot rise to the heights of true repentance.

It is *not the product of mere terror*. I believe that men can be driven into a sort of repentance by preaching to them the wrath of God, or by a sense of that wrath overtaking them in times of sickness or of the approach of death. But terror alone is hardening, rather than softening in its influence. It produces a repentance that needeth to be repented of, but it cannot produce evangelical sorrow for sin.

And, certainly, *true repentance can never be produced in the soul by any outward machinery*. Attempts have been made to produce it by covering the so-called "altar" with drapery of a certain colour, —violet is, I think, the proper colour to represent repentance,—and by darkening the "church" as it is called, and by tolling a bell at a certain time during the service, and by a sort of spiritual charade, acting the tragedy of the cross with mimic blasphemy, or, rather, with real blasphemy, and a shameful mimicry of the crucifixion of our Lord. Surely, no true repentance will ever be wrought in that way. People may be made to weep, and made to feel, by such travesties; but no spiritual result comes of it any more than of the weeping which may be produced at the theatre by some pathetic scene that is acted there. No, no; the preaching of the gospel is the ordained means of getting at men's hearts, and the Holy Ghost's power alone can lead men to repent of their sins, and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation.

Therefore it follows that *genuine mourning for sin comes as a gift of divine grace:* "I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace." Grace comes into the heart, and enlightens the understanding, so that the man understands what his criminality is in the sight of God. Then the grace of God operates upon the conscience so that the man sees the evil and the bitterness of the sin which he has committed against the thrice-holy Jehovah. Then the same grace affects the heart, so

that the man beholds the infinite graciousness and eternal love of Christ, and then begins to loathe himself to think that he should ever have treated Christ so ill. So, by a work of grace upon the soul, and not by any other process, does the Spirit of God make men weep for sin so that they hate it, and turn away from it.

This work of grace is always attended by prayer. Notice the promise in the text: "I will pour . . . the spirit of grace and of supplications." Despairing repentance dares not pray, so that is not the kind of repentance that God accepts. Remorse for sin has often been wrought in men's minds, and it has driven them to despair, and that despair has prevented them from praying. But the godly repentance, which the Holy Ghost gives, always sets the sinner praying. Judas Iscariot repented, after a fashion; but he could not pray, so he went out, and hanged himself. God save all of you from a prayerless, tearless repentance! But if you repent of sin, and at the same time really pray, then I believe we have the right to say that God has poured upon you the spirit of grace and of supplications; and that your mourning for sin will prove to be a godly sorrow that will work in you every blessed thing. God grant to you more and more of this grace as long as ever you live!

This leads me to make a further remark, which is, that *true repentance is continuous in a Christian.* When a man mourns for sin as he ought to do, he does not leave off mourning as long as he is in this world. I am sure of this because we are told that it is "the spirit of grace and of supplications" that God pours upon his people. Now, grace abides in the Christian all his life, and supplication also abides in the Christian all his life; so that we may infer that the third gift of the Spirit, namely, mourning for sin, will also abide in the Christian as long as ever he lives. I have frequently quoted to you the saying of good old Rowland Hill, that the only thing he regretted about going to heaven was that he supposed he should have to say "Good-bye" to repentance when he entered the pearly gates; "but," said he, "she has been my sweet companion, together with faith, all my pilgrim journey, and I expect to have these two graces with me as long as I am in this world." Oh, yes, beloved; we have not done with repenting, and we never shall have done with repenting as long as we are here. The more we rejoice in God, the more we repent to think that we should ever have sinned, and that we do still sin against him. The more we see of the loveliness of Christ, the more we repent that we ever were blind to it. The more we taste of his amazing love, the more we smite upon our breasts, and grieve to think that we should ever have refused him, and should have felt no love in our hearts in return for his great love to us. If you have done repenting, brother, the Holy Spirit has done working in you; for, as long as he works, grace, supplications, and repenting all go together.

II. Now, having shown you that, wherever there is true evangelical mourning for sin, it is the work of the Spirit of God, I pass on to remark, in the second place, that, wherever there is this acceptable mourning for sin, IT IS CAUSED BY LOOKING TO CHRIST.

"They shall look upon me whom they have pierced." What is

the inference from that fact? Why, that repentance is not a preparation for looking to Christ. Do you not see that? The looking is put first, and the mourning afterwards. Yet I know what many of you have thought. You have said to yourselves, "We must mourn for sin, and then look to Christ to pardon it." That is not God's order, and we must always be careful to keep all truths in the order in which he has put them. Remember, sinner, that there will never be a tear of acceptable repentance in your eye till you have first looked to Jesus Christ. "Oh, but!" says someone, "I have had many terrors and horrors concerning sin, yet I have never looked to Christ." Then, all those terrors and horrors are unacceptable. They may be the work of conscience, or, perhaps, partly even the work of the devil himself; but evangelical repentance begins with a believing look at Christ. Thou must first fix thine eye upon Christ before thou canst truly repent. And I tell thee that all thy repentings, apart from believing in Jesus, are of no value, of no avail; therefore, away with them! If thou weepest for sin without fixing thy gaze upon Christ, thou wilt have to weep again over thy repentance, for it is itself another sin. Look away from everything else to Jesus, for he can melt that hard heart of thine, and enable thee to repent. Do not, as our proverbs say, put the cart before the horse, or put the fruit into the ground instead of the root; but begin with looking unto Jesus, and then true repentance will surely follow.

But what is there, in looking to Christ, to make a man hate sin, and repent of it? I answer that,—*Looking to him, we see how sin hates purity.* There was an eloquent, flowery preacher, who, as he delivered his discourse, one Sunday morning, exclaimed, "O Virtue, fair and beauteous maid, if thou shouldst once descend from heaven to earth, and stand amongst the sons of men, they would be all charmed by thy beauties, and would fall down and worship thee!" It so happened that there was a certain plain, blunt preacher, who was not at all an eloquent orator, who had to preach, in the afternoon, in the same building; and having heard the morning discourse, he ventured to repeat the apostrophe to Virtue which I quoted just now, and when he had finished the quotation, he said, "But, O Virtue, thou didst descend from heaven to earth in the form of Jesus Christ, the Son of God; but *did* all men worship thee? Nay, they vilified thee, they abhorred thee, they said, 'Let him be crucified;' and they took thee, and nailed thee to the accursed tree, and put thee to a shameful death!" The death of Jesus Christ upon the cross was an impeachment of the whole world. It showed how bitterly fallen man hates perfection; and if Christ were to come again to the earth as he came before, men would again crucify him; and if Christ's disciples were more like their Lord, I doubt not that they would be far more persecuted than they now are, even as they were in the ages that are past.

Further, when we look on Jesus Christ upon the cross, *we see sin's ingratitude to love.* Christ was not merely pure and perfect, but he came to earth upon no errand but that of love and mercy. There were no thunderbolts in his hands with which to smite the

guilty, but even his enemies said, "This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them." He himself said, "God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved." Love and pity to men were in his bosom, yet see how the world treated him. It would not have pure benevolence in its midst. The Friend of men, the greatest philanthropist who ever lived, loving the most degraded, and seeking to uplift them,—they took him, and nailed him to the cross of wood. O sin, what an accursed thing thou art, that thou didst not only hate purity itself, but also perfect purity combined with infinite love, and that thou didst shoot thy sharpest arrows into the heart of the best Friend that man has ever had!

Yet even that is not all that a sight of Christ upon the cross shows to us, for *it also shows us man's abhorrence of God;* for, after all, that which excited the bitterest enmity of the world was the Godhead of Christ, his Divine attributes. Jesus Christ was God, and he came to this earth; and wicked men, though they could not kill God, went as near to it as they could by killing Christ, who was God as well as man. We use the word "regicide" when we speak of a man who kills a king, and we rightly use the word "Deicide" in speaking of the crime of which the world made itself guilty when it put Christ to death. It was the ever-blessed Son of God whom wicked men nailed to the tree; and the world would commit the same crime again if it could. If all men were gathered together, taking the human race as it now is, and it were put to the vote, "Shall there be any God?" every fool would hold up his hand for "No God." "The fool hath said in his heart, No God." And as the mass of mankind belong to that category, in spiritual things, they say, "No God." It is quite possible that I am addressing some people who would be delighted if it could be said to them, "Now, if you hold up your finger, there will be no more religion to bother you, no judgment-day for you to dread, no resurrection, no hell, no heaven; in fact, God himself will be put away; so far as you are concerned, there will be no God." What good news it would be to you if it were really so, for the thing which troubles you now is that there is a God. Well, that only shows that you also are among those who are guilty of the death of Christ, for, if you could do it, you would extinguish God himself; and this is what they did, as far as they could, when they nailed the Son of God to the cross of Calvary.

But, dear friends, when we rightly look to Christ, *we see that our guilt was so great that only an infinite sacrifice could atone for it.* Our sin comes home to us; at least, mine comes home to me. I see Christ upon the cross, and my self-righteousness says, "I did not crucify him." But my conscience replies, "No, but you heard, for many years, about Christ being put to death, without being at all affected by that fact; and, therefore, you virtually sanctioned the dreadful deed, by not reprobating it; and you were not moved to any feeling of shame even though Jesus died in your room and place." That is all true, my Lord. For many a day, I thought nothing of thee. Then my conscience added, "You know that,

when Christ came to you, in the preaching of the Gospel, for a long while you refused him. Many a time, your conscience was awakened, and you were urged to accept Christ as your Saviour; but you said, 'I will not have this Man to reign over me.'" Yes, Lord, that also is true. I, who now love thee with all my heart, once refused thee; —nay, not merely once, but a thousand times I refused thee; and so I did what the Jews of old did,—rejected thee. Ah, beloved! we chose the pleasures of the world, instead of the love of Christ, so that we were as bad as they were who said, "Not this man; but Barabbas." We chose the poor, paltry, trivial joys of time and sense, and let the Saviour go. Must not all of you confess that you were guilty in this respect?

Possibly, I am addressing some who, in the days of their ignorance, even cursed the name of Jesus, and persecuted or ridiculed his people. You have a loving sister, of whom you used to make what you called "rare fun" because of her love to Christ, and you knew that you were wounding Christ himself through one of his followers. Perhaps there was someone whom you used to persecute very violently for being a lover of the Lord. If you did so, you were persecuting Jesus, even as Saul of Tarsus did. Do not say that you never spat in his dear face, do not say that you never scourged his blessed shoulders. You have done so, as far as you could do it; in spirit you have done it, though not in very deed. Look to him now; look to him now; and, as you see him on the cross, and see what wicked men did to him there, say, "They were only doing it in my place,—doing what I should have done if I had been there,— doing what I have, in effect, done for a great part of my life."

Even we, who have believed in Jesus, must accuse ourselves of guilt concerning our treatment of our dear Lord, as we look into his face. He has forgiven us, blessed be his dear name! He has not a word to say against us. There is nothing but love in his heart toward us; but we cannot forgive ourselves for all the wrong we have done to him. Oftentimes, we have plaited a crown of thorns, and put it on his head, as the soldiers did. That silly talk, when we ought to have been telling out his gospel;—those doubts and fears, that wicked unbelief, when we ought to have been fully trusting him;—that love of the world, that greed of gain, when we ought to have been honouring him with our substance;—all this was the plaiting of thorny crowns to put upon his blessed brow. Ah, yes! we may well look at him, and mourn; who among us can look at him, and not mourn? God forgive us if we can do so!

III. My time is almost spent; but I was going to show you, in the third place, that EVANGELICAL SORROW FOR SIN IS THE CHIEF OF SORROWS. Whenever it comes into the heart, it is not a sham sorrow, but a very real one. Our text says, "They shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn."

The grief of one who has lost his only child is very acute. There is hardly a more painful errand on which a minister of the gospel, or any other Christian, has to go, than to visit a family in which the only child lies dead. There is real sorrow there, for they are

thinking that their name will not be continued; and their dear child was one in whom they took great delight. An only child is usually very much beloved; so, for that child to die, causes special sorrow; and it is a great grief for a man to lose his firstborn,—the beginning of his strength, in whom he had taken such pride. Well now, such is the kind of grief that a true Christian feels concerning his sin. May we have it more and more, O Lord! It were better that I lost every child—better that I lost life itself—than that I should sin against thee; that is a cruel crime which may well make me mourn.

The prophet then goes on to compare the mourning for sin to the mourning of the whole nation when Josiah died, and the land rang with bitter lamentations for the loved monarch who had been slain in battle. The weeping men and wailing women went through every street, and Jeremiah, the weeping prophet, was the chief mourner among them all. Now, such is the sorrow of a soul when it realizes that it crucified Christ. It is a sweet and blessed sorrow; but, still, it is a very deep and real one. I ask that I may be made to feel more and more of it.

> "Lord, let me weep for nought but sin,
> And after none but thee;
> And then I would—oh, that I might!—
> A constant weeper be."

IV. I must not dwell upon this sacred topic, but close with what would have been my fourth division if there had been time for it. That is, that EVANGELICAL REPENTANCE DOES NOT ITSELF CLEANSE US FROM SIN.

Are you startled by that statement? Then, read the 1st verse of the 13th chapter: "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness." Now, dear friends, if mourning for sin took the sin away, there would not be any need of the cleansing fountain; but, although the mourning was so real and so bitter, it did not take away the mourners' sin. Toplady was right when he sang,—

> "Could my zeal no respite know,
> Could my tears for ever flow,
> All for sin could not atone:
> Thou must save, and thou alone."

But while evangelical repentance does not take away sin, wherever it is present, it is a proof that sin is taken away. If thou hast repented of thy sin, and hast believed in Jesus, then thou hast been cleansed in the open fountain, and that same blood, which has cleansed thee from guilt, will yet prove that it can also cleanse thee from the power of sin. Am I addressing any who are now mourning on account of sin? "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." That blessedness awaits you, for "blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered." Go and confess your transgression unto the Lord; say to him, with David, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned." Go and stand at the foot of the cross, and view the flowing of your Saviour's precious blood; and while

you stand there, and mourn for him, the Holy Spirit will be pleased to bear witness with your spirit, and you shall have the blessed assurance which will enable you to know that the blood of Jesus has washed all your sin away, and you shall go on your way rejoicing,—hating the sin that made him suffer, and praising the grace that has forgiven it.

Ere I close, I would that some poor sinner, instead of trying to mourn for sin, would first look to Jesus Christ upon the cross, for that is the way to be made to mourn for sin. Instead of thinking that repentance can cleanse you, look to the finished work of Jesus, and believe in him, for that is the only way by which pardon can come to you. May God bless us all, and keep us ever repenting, and ever believing, and he shall have the praise and the glory for ever and ever! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

ZECHARIAH XII., AND XIII., 1.

Chapter xii. Verse 1. *The burden of the word of the LORD for Israel, saith the LORD, which stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him.*

Note how this chapter begins: "The burden of the word of the Lord *for* Israel,"—not against Israel. The gospel is always, to the true preacher of it, the burden of the Lord; but, to those who receive it, it is a burden of blessing, a load of mercy. To those who reject it, it will become a burdensome stone, crushing them to their eternal ruin. God grant, in his infinite mercy, that none of us may belong to the last class!

2. *Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah and against Jerusalem.*

This is a promise of God's abounding mercy to his chosen people Israel. When he comes to their aid, they shall be a cup of trembling to their enemies. Those enemies will try to swallow them, but they will find that they are drinking a cup of poison, which will cause their own death. Oh, that the day might soon come when God would remember his ancient people, the Jews, and bring them back to their own land, as he certainly will do in the fulness of time; and when he has done it, then it shall come to pass that all who fight against them shall find his people to be as a cup of trembling to them.

This promise, which is to be literally fulfilled to God's chosen people, the seed of Abraham, is also spiritually true to all believers. Christian, your enemies cannot really hurt you. If they could drink you up, as men drink a cup of wine, you would be a cup of trembling to them, they would find that they had taken in more than they wanted. All the persecutors of the Church of God, in smiting this stone, have themselves been broken on it. They have found that they have undertaken a task which has ended in their own destruction. Woe unto the man who fights against the Church of the living God! Victory must always come to the Lord's people, for greater is he who is with them than all that can be against them.

3. *And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it.*

This is true literally, but it is also true spiritually. As the Church of God is to be a cup of trembling to its enemies, so is it also to be a burden-

some stone. They do not like it; they cannot bear it. They would, if they could, get rid of the spiritual Church of God; but they cannot get rid of it. There it is,—a stone, cut out of the mountain without hands, which will grow until it fills the whole earth, and breaks in pieces everything that opposes it. Those who set themselves against God, and against his Christ, shall find themselves crushed to atoms by this mighty stone.

4. *In that day, saith the* LORD, *I will smite every horse with astonishment, and his rider with madness:*

The chief strength of Jerusalem's enemies lay in horses and chariots; but God bids his people not to fear them, for he knows how to overcome all power, whether it be the power of cavalry or the power of infantry. He knows how to smite every horse with astonishment, and every rider with madness, for, "as the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people, from henceforth even for ever," and he can protect them against the most powerful foes that may assail them.

4. *And I will open mine eyes upon the house of Judah,*

It looked as if the Lord had been asleep, but now he says, "'I will open mine eyes upon the house of Judah,'—I will look at them, and note their sufferings, pity their griefs, plan for their good, and come forth for their defence."

4. *And will smite every horse of the people with blindness.*

Their enemies shall not be able to see them, but God will see them, and he will deliver his people, and overthrow all their adversaries.

5, 6. *And the governors of Judah shall say in their heart, The inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be my strength in the* LORD *of hosts their God. In that day will I make the governors of Judah like an hearth of fire among the wood, and like a torch of fire in a sheaf; and they shall devour all the people round about, on the right hand and on the left: and Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place, even in Jerusalem.*

The literal prophecy is that the seed of Israel shall go back to their own land, and shall prevail over their adversaries; but the spiritual meaning is that the Church of God shall have great power among the people of the earth. They shall have fire put into them,—the fire of the Holy Ghost; and they shall be like a lighted firebrand amongst the wood, or as a flaming torch in a sheaf of corn; and you know how soon the sheaf would be burnt up. If God has put within you fire from heaven, you will be sure to burn, and those with whom you live will soon feel the flame. Place one really gracious man in any district, and if he is thoroughly on fire with the Holy Spirit, it will be like throwing a blazing firebrand into a field of dry corn. What a conflagration will there be! The Lord send us many such blessed burnings!

7. *The* LORD *also shall save the tents of Judah first, that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem do not magnify themselves against Judah.*

God will begin by saving the most defenceless. The tents of the people were easily swept away by their powerful foes. "Therefore," says the prophet, "the Lord shall save the tents of Judah first." As for the people in the strongly defended city of Jerusalem, he would protect them, but he would do it in such a way that they should not take the glory to themselves. God is always very jealous of his own honour. He will save us, but it will be in a way that shall prevent our pride from glorying in it. He will never allow one saved soul to be able to say, "I saved myself," or "I contributed to the merit which has brought me to heaven." No; God must have all the glory,—every jot and tittle of it; and all his people are glad that he should have it.

8. *In that day shall the* LORD *defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David; and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the* LORD *before them.*

What a blessed thing it is when the Lord strengthens all his people, so that the weakest amongst them are as strong as that ruddy-faced youth who smote Goliath, and the strongest of them are like the swift-winged angels of God, ready to do his bidding! Oh, that this church might be in that blessed state! You remember how it is written that, when Israel came up out of Egypt, "there was not one feeble person among their tribes." When will the whole Church of Christ get to be in that condition? O ye feeble ones, lay hold upon the promise now before us, and do not rest till it is fulfilled in you! "He that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David; and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the Lord before them."

9—11 *And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn. In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon.*

No doubt these verses refer, primarily, to the great mourning when King Josiah fell in battle, when all the people wept and mourned for many days because their king had been slain by the arrows shot by the archers. But this is also typical of the lamentation of a heart when it is broken on account of the death of Christ. Sorrow for sin is to be after the fashion of that great national mourning of which Jeremiah sang so plaintively in the Book of Lamentations.

12. *And the land shall mourn, every family apart; the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart;*

For this was to be a personal sorrow, in which both husbands and wives must weep on their own account.

12. *The family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart;*

Perhaps these names are mentioned to indicate different classes and orders of persons,—the family of the house of David the king shall mourn, and the family of the house of Nathan the prophet shall mourn. Both David and Nathan had long since gone, but their descendants were still called by their names.

13. *The family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart;*

The priests, as well as the kings and the prophets, were to be represented in this universal mourning.

13. *The family of Shimei apart, and their wives apart;*

Shimei, or Simeon, as the Septuagint gives it,—which may either represent the scribes, or else may refer to the people in general. These shall all mourn, personally and separately, for him whom they have pierced.

14. *All the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart.*

Why these chapters were divided here, I cannot imagine, for it is clear that the passage should run right on.

Chapter xiii. Verse 1. *In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness.*

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

HOLINESS DEMANDED.

A Sermon

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C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On a Lord's-day Evening, in 1862.

"Holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."—Hebrews xii. 14.

ONE feels most happy when blowing the trumpet of jubilee, proclaiming peace to broken hearts, freedom to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound. But God's watchman has another trumpet, which he must sometimes blow; for thus saith the Lord unto him, "Blow the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain." Times there are when we must ring the tocsin; men must be startled from their sleep, they must be roused up to enquire, "What are we? Where are we? Whither are we going?" Nor is it altogether amiss for the wisest virgins to look to the oil in their vessels, and for the soundest Christians to be sometimes constrained to examine the foundations of their hope, to trace back their evidences to the beginning, and make an impartial survey of their state before God. Partly for this reason, but with a further view to the awakening and stirring up of those who are destitute of all holiness, I have selected for our topic, "Holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."

There has been a desperate attempt made by certain Antinomians to get rid of the injunction which the Holy Spirit here means to enforce. They have said that this is the imputed holiness of Christ. Do they not know, when they so speak, that, by an open perversion, they utter that which is false? I do not suppose that any man in his senses can apply that interpretation to the context, "Follow peace with all men, and holiness." Now, the holiness meant is evidently one that can be followed like peace; and it must be transparent to any ingenuous man that it is something which is the act and duty of the person who follows it. We are to follow peace; this is practical peace, not the peace made for us, but "the fruit of righteousness which is sown in peace of them that make peace."

We are to follow holiness,—this must be practical holiness; the opposite of impurity, as it is written, "God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness." The holiness of Christ is not a thing to follow; I mean, if we look at it imputatively. That we have at once; it is given to us the moment we believe. The righteousness of Christ is not to be followed; it is bestowed upon the soul in the instant when it lays hold of Christ Jesus. This is another kind of holiness. It is, in fact, as every one can see who chooses to read the connection, practical, vital holiness which is the purport of this admonition. It is conformity to the will of God, and obedience to the Lord's command. It is, in fine, the Spirit's work in the soul, by which a man is made like God, and becomes a partaker of the divine nature, being delivered from the corruption which is in the world through lust. No straining, no hacking at the text can alter it. There it stands, whether men like it or not. There are some who, for special reasons best known to themselves, do not like it, just as no thieves ever like policemen or gaols; yet there it stands, and it means no other than what it says: "Without holiness,"—practical, personal, active, vital holiness,—"no man shall see the Lord." Dealing with this solemn assertion, fearfully exclusive as it is, shutting out as it does so many professors from all communion with God on earth, and all enjoyment of Christ in heaven, I shall endeavour, first, *to give some marks and signs whereby a man may know whether he hath this holiness or not;* secondly, *to give sundry reasons by way of improvement of the solemn fact,* "Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord;" and then, thirdly, *to plead hard, in Christ's stead, with those who are lovers of gain, that they may bethink themselves ere time be over, and opportunity past.*

I. First, then, brethren, ye are anxious to know whether ye have holiness or not. Now, if our text said that, without perfection of holiness, no man could have any communion with Christ, it would shut every one of us out, for no one, who knows his own heart, ever pretends to be perfectly conformed to God's will. It does not say, "Perfection of holiness," mark; but "holiness." This holiness is a thing of growth. It may be in the soul as the grain of mustard-seed, and yet not developed; it may be in the heart as a wish and a desire, rather than anything that has been fully realized, —a groaning, a panting, a longing, a striving. As the Spirit of God waters it, it will grow till the mustard-seed shall become a tree. Holiness, in a regenerate heart, is but an infant; it is not matured, —perfect it is in all its parts, but not perfect in its development. Hence, when we find many imperfections and many failings in ourselves, we are not to conclude that, therefore, we have no interest in the grace of God. This would be altogether contrary to the meaning of the text. As it is not so much my present purpose to show what this holiness is as what it is not, I think, while I am endeavouring to undeceive those who have not this holiness, those who are not condemned may reasonably draw some comfortable inferences as to their own pursuit of this inestimable grace.

Well, now, let us note four sorts of people who try to get on

without holiness. First, there is *the Pharisee.* The Pharisee goes to work with outward ceremonies. He pays tithes of all that he possesses,—his anise, his mint, his cummin,—everything, even to the tithe of his parsley-bed, he gives. He gives alms to the poor, he wears his phylacteries, and makes broad the borders of his garment;—in fact, anything and everything that is commanded ceremonially he most punctiliously attends to; but, all the while, he is devouring widows' houses, he is living in the practice of secret sin, and he thinks that by ceremonies he shall be able to propitiate God, and be accepted. Sinner, pharisaic sinner, hear the death-knell of thy hopes tolled out by this verse: "Without holiness,"—and that is a thing thou knowest nothing of,—"no man shall see the Lord." Thy ceremonies are vain and frivolous; even if God ordained them, seeing thou puttest thy trust in them, they shall utterly deceive and fail thee, for they do not constitute even a part of holiness. Thou canst not see God till thy heart be changed, till thy nature be renewed, till thine actions, in the tenor of them, shall become such as God would have them to be. Mere ceremonialists think they can get on without holiness. Fell delusion! Do I speak to any Ritualist who finds himself awkwardly situated here? Do I speak to any Romanist who has entered into a place where, not the works of the law, but the righteousness of Christ is preached? Let me remind you again, very solemnly, my hearer, that those fine hopes of yours, built upon the manœuvres of the priests, and upon your own performances, shall utterly fail you in that day when most you shall need them. Your soul shall then stand in shivering nakedness when most you need to be well equipped before the eyes of God. These men know not true holiness.

Then there is *the moralist.* He has never done anything wrong in his life. He is not very observant of ceremonies, it is true; perhaps he even despises them; but he treats his neighbour with integrity, he believes that, so far as he knows, if his ledger be examined, it bears no evidence of a single dishonest deed. As touching the law, he is blameless: no one ever doubted the purity of his manner; from his youth up, his carriage has been amiable, his temperament what every one could desire, and the whole tenor of his life is such that we may hold him up as an example of moral propriety. Ah, but this is not holiness before God. Holiness excludes immorality, but morality does not amount to holiness; for morality may be but the cleaning of the outside of the cup and the platter, while the heart may be full of wickedness. Holiness deals with the thoughts and intents, the purposes, the aims, the objects, the motives of men. Morality does but skim the surface, holiness goes into the very caverns of the great deep; holiness requires that the heart shall be set on God, and that it shall beat with love to him. The moral man may be complete in his morality without that. Methinks I might draw such a parallel as this. Morality is a sweet, fair corpse, well washed and robed, and even embalmed with spices; but holiness is the living man, as fair and as lovely as the other, but having life. Morality lies there, of the earth, earthy, soon to be food for corruption and worms; holiness

waits and pants with heavenly aspirations, prepared to mount and dwell in immortality beyond the stars. These twain are of opposite nature; the one belongs to this world, the other belongs to that world beyond the skies. It is not said in heaven, "Moral, moral, moral art thou, O God!" but "Holy, holy, holy art thou, O Lord!" You note the difference between the two words at once. The one, how icy cold; the other, oh, how animated! Such is mere morality, and such is holiness! Moralist!—I know I speak to many such,—remember that your best morality will not save you; you must have more than this, for without holiness,—and that not of yourself, it must be given you of the Spirit of God,—without holiness, no man shall see the Lord.

Another individual, who thinks to get on without holiness, and who does win a fair reputation in certain circles, is *the experimentalist.* You must be aware that there are some professed followers of Christ whose whole religious life is inward; to tell you the truth, there is no life at all; but their own profession is that it is all inward. I have had the misery to be acquainted with one or two such. They are voluble talkers, discoursing with much satisfaction of themselves, but bitter critics of all who differ from them in the slightest degree; having an ordained standard as to the proper length to which Christian experience should go, cutting off everybody's head who was taller than they were, and stretching every man out by the neck who happened to be a little too short. I have known some of these persons. If a minister should say "duty" in the sermon, they would look as if they would never hear him again. He must be a dead legalist,—a "letter man", I think they call him. Or, if they are exhorted to holiness, why, they tell you they are perfect in Christ Jesus, and therefore there is no reason why they should have any thought of perfection in the work of the Spirit within. Groaning, grunting, quarrelling, denouncing,—not following peace with all men, but stirring up strife against all,—this is the practice of their religion. This is the summit to which they climb, and from which they look down with undisguised contempt upon all those worms beneath who are striving to serve God, and to do good in their day and generation. Now I pray you to remember that, against such men as these, there are many passages of Scripture most distinctly levelled; I think this is one among many others. Sirs, you may say what you will about what you dream you have felt, you may write what you please about what you fancy you have experienced; but if your own outward life be unjust, unholy, ungenerous, and unloving, you shall find no credit among us as to your being in Christ: "Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord." The moment you know a man who is drunk on a Saturday night, and then enjoys So-and-so's preaching on a Sunday; the moment you know a man who can tell you what a child of God should be, and then appears himself exactly what he should not be, just quit his company, and let him go to his own place, and where that is, Judas can tell you. Oh, beware of such high-fliers, with their waxen wings, mounting up to the very sun,—how great shall be their fall, when he that searches all hearts shall

open the book, and say, "I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink. . . Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it not to me."

There is another class of persons, happily fewer than they once were, but there are some among us still,—*opinionists*, who think they can do without holiness. These, too, it has sometimes been my misfortune to know. They have learned a sound creed, or perhaps an unsound one, for there are as many Arminians as Calvinists in this line,—they think they have got hold of *the* truth, that they are the men, and that, when they die, the faithful will fail from among men. They understand theology very accurately. They are wiser than their teachers. They can—

"A hair divide
Betwixt the west and north-west side."

There is no question about their being masters in divinity. If degrees went according to merit, they would have been dubbed "D.D." years ago, for they know everything, and are not a little proud that they do. And yet these men live a life that is a stench even in the nostrils of men who make no profession of religion. We have some of this kind in all congregations. I wish you would not come here. If we could do you good, we might be glad to see you; but you do so much hurt to the rest, and bring so much discredit upon the cause at large, that your room would be better than your company. You listen to the sermon, and sometimes perhaps have the condescension to speak well of the preacher, who wishes you would not. Yet, after the sermon is done, on the road home, there may be a public-house door just opened at one o'clock, and the brother refreshes himself, and perhaps does so many times. Even if it be the holy day, it is all the same, and yet he is a dear and precious child of God. No doubt he is in his own estimation. And then, during the week, he lives as others live, and acts as others act, and yet congratulates himself that he knows the truth, and understands the doctrines of the gospel, and therefore he will surely be saved! Out with thee, man! Out with thee! Down with thy hopes! "Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord."

"No big words of ready talkers,
No mere doctrines will suffice;
Broken hearts, and humble walkers—
These are dear in Jesus' eyes."

Heart-work, carried out afterwards into life-work,—this is what the Lord wants. You may perish as well with true doctrines as with false, if you pervert the true doctrine into licentiousness. You may go to hell by the cross as surely as you may by the theatre, or by the vilest of sin. You may perish with the name of Jesus on your lips, and with a sound creed sealed on your very bosom, for "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." "Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Now, if any of you belong to either of

these four classes, I think you cannot help knowing it, and, being destitute of gospel holiness, you have good cause to bewail your character, and tremble for your destiny.

But, to help you still further, brethren, that man is destitute of true holiness *who can look back upon his own past sin without sorrow.* Oh, to think of our past lives! There were some of us who knew the Lord at fifteen years of age, but those fifteen years of unregeneracy,—we can never forget them! Others may say, "We did not know him till we were fifty or sixty." Ah, my dear brethren! you have much to weep over, but so have those of us who knew the Lord in early life. I can look back upon God's mercy with delight, but I hope I shall never be able to look back upon my sins with complacency. Whenever a man looks to any of his past faults and shortcomings, it ought to be through his tears. Some men recall their past lives, and talk of their old sins, and seem to roll them under their tongues as a sweet morsel. They live their sins over again. As it was said of Alexander,—

> "He fought his battles o'er again,
> And twice he slew the slain."

There are those who revel in the memory of their iniquities. They live their life in imagination over again. They recollect some deed of lewdness, or some act of infamy; and, as they think it over, they dare not repeat it, for their profession would be spoiled; but they love the thought, and cultivate it with a vicious zest. Thou art no friend to true holiness, but an utter stranger to it unless the past causes thee profound sorrow, and sends thee to thy knees to weep and hope that God, for Christ's sake, has blotted it out.

And I am quite sure that you know nothing of true holiness *if you can look forward to any future indulgence of sensual appetites with a certain degree of delightful anticipation.* Have I a man here, a professed Christian, who has formed some design in his mind to indulge the flesh, and to enjoy forbidden dainties when an opportunity occurs? Ah, sir! if thou canst think of those things that may come in thy way without tremor, I suspect thee: I would thou wouldst suspect thyself. Since the day that some of us knew Christ, we have always woke up in the morning with a fear lest we should that day disown our Master. And there is one fear which sometimes haunts me, and I must confess it; and were it not for faith in God, it would be too much for me. I cannot read the life of David without some painful emotions. All the time he was a young man, his life was pure before God, and in the light of the living it shone with a glorious lustre; but when grey hairs began to be scattered on his head, the man after God's heart sinned. I have sometimes felt inclined to pray that my life may come to a speedy end, lest haply, in some evil hour, some temptation should come upon me, and I should fall. And do you not feel the same? Can you look forward to the future without any fear? Does not the thought ever cross your mind,—"He that thinketh he standeth may yet fall"? And the very possibility of such a thing,—does it not drive you to God's mercy-seat, and do you not cry, "Hold thou

me up, and I shall be safe"? There is no doxology in Scripture which I enjoy more than that one at the end of the Epistle of Jude: "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to him be glory." I say you are a stranger to holiness of heart if you can look forward to a future fall without great alarm.

Again, methinks you have great cause for questioning, *unless your holiness is uniform;* I mean, if your life is angelic abroad and devilish at home. You must suspect that it is at home that you are what you really are. I question whether any man is much better than he is thought to be by his wife and family, for they, after all, see the most of us, and know the truth about us; and if, sir, though you seem in the pulpit, or on the platform, or in the shop, to be amiable, Christian, and God-like to the passer-by, your children should have to mark your unkindness, your want of fatherly affection for their souls, and your wife has to complain of your domineering, of the absence of everything that is Christ-like, you may shrewdly suspect that there is something wrong in the state of your heart. O sirs, true holiness is a thing that will keep by night and by day, at home and abroad, on the land and on the sea! That man is not right with God who would not do the same in the dark that he would do in the light; who does not feel, "If every eye should look upon me, I would not be different from what I am when no eye gazes upon me; that which keeps me right is not the judgment and opinions of men, but the eye of the Omnipresent, and the heart of the Lord who loves me." Is your obedience uniform? Some farmers I know, in the country, maintain a creditable profession in the village where they live; they go to a place of worship, and seem to be very good people: but there is a farmer's dinner once a year, it is only once a year, and we will not say anything about how they get home,—the less that is said, the better for their reputation. "It is only once a year," they tell us; but holiness does not allow of dissipation even "once a year." And we know some who, when they go on the Continent, for instance, say, "Well, we need not be quite so exact there;" and therefore the Sabbath is utterly disregarded, and the sanctities of daily life are neglected, so reckless are they in their recreations. Well, sirs, if your religion is not warranted to keep in any climate, it is good for nothing. I like the remark which I heard from one of the sailors on board ship in crossing the Irish Channel. A passenger said, to try him, "Wouldn't you like to attend a certain place of amusement?" which he mentioned. "Well, sir," said the sailor, "I go there as often as ever I like; I have a religion that lets me go as often as I think proper." "Oh, how is that?" he enquired. "Because I never like to go at all," was the reply; "I do not keep away because of any law, for it is no trial to me; but I should be unhappy to go there." Surely the fish, were it asked if it did not wish to fly, would reply, "I am not unhappy because I am not allowed to fly; it is not my element." So the Christian can say, "I am not unhappy because I do not spend my nights in worldly society, because I do not join in their revelry and wantonness; it is not my element, and

I could not enjoy it. Should you drag me into it, it would be a martyrdom which to my spirit would be alike repulsive and painful." You are a stranger to holiness if your heart does not feel that it revolts at the thought of sin.

Then, let me further remark, that *those who can look with delight or any degree of pleasure upon the sins of others are not holy.* We know of some, who will not themselves perpetrate an unseemly jest, yet, if another does so, and there is a laugh excited upon some not over-decent remark, they laugh, and thus give sanction to the impropriety. If there is a low song sung in their hearing, which others applaud, though they cannot quite go the length of joining in the plaudits, still they secretly enjoy it; they betray a sort of gratification that they cannot disguise; they confess to a gusto that admires the wit while it cannot endorse the sentiment. They are glad the minister was not there; they are glad to think the deacon did not happen to see them just at that moment; yet still, if there could be a law established to make the thing pretty respectable, they would not mind. Some of you know people who fall into this snare. There are professing Christians who go where you at one time could not go; but, seeing that they do it, you go too, and there you see others engaged in sin, and it becomes respectable because you give it countenance. There are many things, in this world, that would be execrated if it were not that Christian men go to them, and the ungodly men say, "Well, if it is not righteous, there is not much harm in it, after all; it is innocent enough if we keep within bounds." Mind! mind! mind, professor, if thine heart begins to suck in the sweets of another man's sin, it is unsound in the sight of God; if thou canst even wink at another man's lust, depend upon it that thou wilt soon shut thine eye on thine own, for we are always more severe with other men than we are with ourselves. There must be an absence of the vital principle of godliness when we can become partakers of other men's sins by applauding or joining with them in the approval of them. Let us examine ourselves scrupulously, then, whether we be among those who have no evidences of that holiness without which no man can see God.

But, beloved, we hope better things of you, and things which accompany salvation. If you and I, as in the sight of God, feel that we would be holy if we could, that there is not a sin we wish to spare, that we would be like Jesus,—O that we could!—that we would sooner suffer affliction than ever run into sin, and displease our God; if our heart be really right in God's statutes, then, despite all the imperfections we bemoan, we have holiness, wherein we may rejoice, and we pray to our gracious God,—

> "Finish, then, thy new creation,
> Pure and spotless let us be."

II. Now, then, for the second point very briefly indeed: "Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord;" that is to say, no man can have communion with God in this life, and no man can have enjoyment with God in the life to come, without holiness.

"Can two walk together except they be agreed?" If thou goest with Belial, dost thou think that Christ will go with thee? Will Christ be a pot companion for thee? Dost thou expect to take the Lord of love and mercy with thee to the haunts of sin? Professor, dost thou think the just and holy One will stand at thy counter to be co-trader with thee in thy tricks? What thinkest thou, O man! wouldst thou make Christ a sharer of thy guilt? and yet he would be so if he had fellowship with thee in it. Nay, if thou wilt go on in acts of unrighteousness and unholiness, Christ parts company with thee, or, rather, thou never didst have any fellowship with him. Thou hast gone out from us because thou wert not of us; for, if thou hadst been of us, doubtless thou wouldst have continued with us. And as to heaven, dost thou think to go there with thine unholiness? God smote an angel down from heaven for sin, and will he let man in with sin in his right hand? God would sooner extinguish heaven than see sin despoil it. It is enough for him to bear with thine hypocrisies on earth; shall he have them flung in his own face in heaven? What, shall an unholy life utter its licentiousness in the golden streets? Shall there be sin in that higher and better paradise? No, no; God has sworn by his holiness —and he will not, he cannot lie,—that those who are not holy, whom his Spirit has not renewed, who have not been, by the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit, made to love that which is good, and hate that which is evil, shall never stand in the congregation of the righteous. Sinner, it is a settled matter with God that no man shall see him without holiness.

III. I come to my last point, which is, pleading with you. Doubtless, there are some in this vast crowd who have some sort of longings after salvation and after heaven. My eye looks round; yes, sometimes it has been my wont to gaze with sorrow upon some few here whose cases I know. Do I not remember one? He has been very often impressed, and so impressed, too, that he has not been able to sleep. Night after night he has prayed, he has wrestled with God, and there is only one thing in his way, and that is drink, strong drink! By the time that Wednesday or Thursday comes round, he begins to forget what he heard on Sunday. Sometimes, he has taken the pledge, and kept it three months; but the craving has been too strong for him, and then he has given all resolutions and vows up, and has plunged into his besetting sin worse than before. Others I know in whom it is another sin. You are here now, are you? You do not come of a morning, and yet, when you come at night, you feel it very severely; but why not come here in the morning? Because your shop is open, and that shop seems to stand between you and any hope of salvation. There are others who say, "Well, now, if I go to hear that man, I must give up the vice that disquiets my conscience; but I cannot yet, I cannot yet." And you are willing to be damned for the sake of some paltry joy? Well, if you will be damned, it shall not be for want of reasoning with you, and weeping over you. Let me put it to you,—do you say that you cannot give up the sin because of the profit? Profit! Profit, forsooth! "What shall it profit a man,

if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" What profit have you obtained hitherto? You have put it all into a bag full of holes; what you have earned one way, you have spent in another; and you know that, if this life were all, you surely have not been any the better for it. Besides, what is profit when compared with your immortal soul? Oh, I adjure you, lose not gold for dross, lose not substance for shadows! Lose not your immortal soul for the sake of some temporary gain!

But it is not profit with some of you, it is pleasure, it is a morbid passion. You feel, perhaps, for some particular sin which happens to beset you, such an intense longing, and in looking back upon it afterwards, you think you could give up everything but that. Young man, is it some secret sin which we must not mention, or is it some private guilt which is hidden from all hearts but thine own? O soul, what is this pleasure, after all? Weigh it, weigh it; what does it come to? Is it equal to the pain it costs thee now, to the pangs of conscience, to the agonies of remorse? When an American doctor, who had led a loose life, came to die, he seemed to wake up from a sort of stupor, and he said, "Find that word, find that word." "What word?" they asked. "Why," he said, "that awful word,—remorse!" He said it again,—"Remorse!" and then, gathering up his full strength, he fairly seemed to shriek it out,—"*Remorse!*" "Write it," said he, "write it." It was written. "Write it with larger letters, and let me gaze at it; underline it. And now," said he, "none of you know the meaning of that word, and may you never know it; it has an awful meaning in it, and I feel it now,—*Remorse! Remorse!! Remorse!!!*"

What, I ask, is the pleasure of sin contrasted with the results it brings in this life? and what, I ask, is this pleasure compared with the joys of godliness? Little as you may think I know of the joys of the world, yet so far as I can form a judgment, I can say that I would not take all the joys that earth can ever afford in a hundred years for one half-hour of what my soul has known in fellowship with Christ. We, who believe in him, do have our sorrows; but, blessed be God, we do have our joys, and they are such joys—oh, such joys, with such substance in them, and such reality and certainty, that we could not and would not exchange them for anything except heaven in its fruition.

And then, bethink thee, sinner, what are all these pleasures when compared with the loss of thy soul? There is a gentleman, high in position in this world, with fair lands and a large estate, who, when he took me by the button-hole after a sermon,—and he never hears me preach without weeping,—said to me, "O sir, it does seem such an awful thing that I should be such a fool!" "And what for?" I asked. "Why," he said, "for the sake of that court, and of those gaieties of life, and of mere honour, and dress, and fashion, I am squandering away my soul. I know," he said, "I know the truth, but I do not follow it. I have been stirred in my heart to do what is right, but I go on just as I have done before; I fear I shall sink back into the same state as before. Oh, what a fool I am," said he, "to choose pleasures that only last a little while,

and then to be lost for ever and for ever!" I pleaded hard with him, but I pleaded in vain; there was such intoxication in the gaiety of life that he could not leave it. Alas! alas! if we had to deal with sane men, our preaching would be easy; but sin is a madness, such a madness that, when men are bitten by it, they would not be persuaded even though one should rise from the dead. "Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord."

"But," I hear someone say, "it is impossible; I have tried it, and I have broken down; I did try to get better, but I did not succeed; it is of no use, it cannot be done." You are right, my dear friend, and you are wrong. You are right, it is of no use going about it as you did; if you went in your own strength, holiness is a thing you cannot get, it is beyond you. The depth says, "It is not in me;" and the height saith, "It is not in me." You can no more make yourself holy than you could create a world. But you are wrong to despair, for Christ can do it; he can do it for you, and he can do it now. Believe on him, and that believing will be the proof that he is working in you. Trust him, and he that has suffered for thy sins, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, shall come in, and put to rout the lion of the pit. He will bruise Satan under thy feet shortly. There is no corruption too strong for him to overcome, there is no habit too firm for him to break. He can turn a lion to a lamb, and a raven to a dove. Trust him to save thee, and he will do it, whosoever thou mayest be, and whatsoever thy past life may have been. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved;"—that is, he shall be saved from his sins, and delivered from his evil practices; he shall be made a new man in Christ Jesus by the power of the Spirit, received through the medium of his faith. Believe, poor soul, that Christ is able to save thee, and he will do it. He will be as good as thy faith, and as good as his own word. May he now add his own blessing to the word I have spoken, and to the people who have heard it, for his own sake! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

PSALM XXXII.

Verse 1. *Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.*

The Lord can bless the man who is full of sin only when his sin is covered by the atonement—the propitiation—which hides his sin even from the sight of God; and he is a truly blessed man who, although he knows himself to be a sinner, also knows that his sin is forgiven and covered.

2. *Blessed is the man unto whom the* LORD *imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.*

He is an honest, truthful, guileless man. A man cannot be a blessed man while he is double-minded, while he has craft, or what is here called guile, within him. A sincere and guileless heart is an evidence of grace, so "blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile."

But, David, how did you obtain this forgiveness? Let us hear the story of your experience.

3, 4. *When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah.*

He tells us that he had such a sense of guilt that he could not rest; and until he made confession of his sin to God, he became sick in body as well as in soul. It seemed as if his very bones, the most solid part of his frame, were beginning to decay under the influence of his grief; and he was getting worse and worse in the brokenness of his spirit till he seemed like a dried-up country in which there is no dew. His moisture was turned into the drought of summer. Yes, David; but how did you get rid of your sin? We see how deeply you felt it; how did you get clear of it?

5. *I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah.*

You see, as long as he covered his sin, God did not cover it; but when he no longer tried to hide it, but made an open confession of it, then God blotted it out, and covered it up for ever. There was but a believing confession of sin, and David's heart was at rest at once. Shall we not try the same remedy? Will we not go to God, and say, "Father, I have sinned"? Is there any better course than that? Is it not right to acknowledge a wrong? Is it not the simplest and safest way to go at once to him who blots out sin, and ask for mercy?

6, 7. *For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found: surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him. Thou art my hiding place: thou shalt preserve me from trouble; thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance. Selah.*

Surely, if God has given us the pardon of our sin, he will give us everything else that we need. If he has delivered us from hell, he will certainly deliver us from trouble.

8. *I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye.*

The forgiven man is afraid of going wrong again; he is as anxious about his future life as he was about his past sin. So the Lord meets him, and gives him the gracious promise contained in this verse.

9. *Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee.*

Do not be hard-mouthed; be obedient to God's will; be tender of heart, and willing of spirit. The Lord will make his children go in the right way somehow or other; he will put a bit into their mouths if nothing else will do it, but it would be much better for them if they would be of tender and gentle spirit, and would yield at once to his gracious and holy will.

10. *Many sorrows shall be to the wicked:*

Godly men also have many sorrows, but then they always have sweets with their bitters; but "many sorrows shall be to the wicked," and there will be no sweets to go with them.

10. *But he that trusteth in the LORD, mercy shall compass him about.*

He shall have mercy all round him. He who trusts his God shall find that the golden compasses of divine mercy shall strike a circle of gracious protection all round him: "mercy shall compass him about."

11. *Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, ye righteous: and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart.*

Godly men ought to be glad men. They have a right to be happy. They recommend the gospel when they are so, and they are the true sons of the King of kings when they do not go mourning all their days.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

SLEEPERS AROUSED.

A Sermon

PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 29TH, 1904,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Thursday Evening, July 27th, 1876.

"But Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship; and he lay, and was fast asleep."—Jonah i. 5.

WE are told, before this fact is mentioned, that the Lord sent out a great wind into the sea to overtake the bark in which Jonah was sailing for Tarshish. The great wheels of providence are continually revolving in fulfilment of God's purposes concerning his own people. For them, winds blow, and tempests rise. It is a wonderful thing that the whole machinery of nature should be made subservient to the divine purpose of the salvation of his redeemed. I was in a diamond-cutting factory at Amsterdam, and I noticed that there were huge wheels revolving, and a great deal of power being developed and expended; but when I came to look at the little diamond,—in some cases a very small one indeed,—upon which that power was being brought to bear, it seemed very remarkable that all that power should be concentrated upon such a little yet very precious object. In a similar style, all the wheels of providence and nature, great as they are, are brought to bear, by divine skill and love, upon a thing which appears to many people to be of trifling value, but which is to Christ of priceless worth; namely, a human soul. Here is this common-looking Jew,—Jonah, named, according to the general rule that names go by contraries, "a dove", for, at any rate, on this occasion, he looked more like the raven that would not come back to the ark; and for this one man,—this altogether unamiable prophet,—the sea must be tossed in tempest, and a whole shipful of people must have their lives put in jeopardy. This truth is a very far-reaching one. You cannot well exaggerate it. The vast universe it but a platform for the display of God's grace, and all material things, that now exist, will be set aside when the great drama of grace is completed. The material universe is but scaffolding for the Church of Christ. It is but the temporary structure upon which the wonderful mystery of redeeming love is

being carried on to perfection. See, then, that, as the great wind was raised to follow Jonah, and to lead to his return to the path of duty, so all things work together for the good of God's people, and all things that exist are being bowed and bent towards God's one solemn eternal purpose,—the salvation of his own.

But note also that, while God was awake, Jonah was asleep. While storms were blowing, Jonah was slumbering. It is a strange sight, O Christian, that you should be an important item in the universe, and yet that you should not know it, or care about it;—that for you all things are keeping their proper place and time, and yet that you are the only one who does not seem to perceive it; and, therefore, you fall into a dull, lethargic, sleepy state. Everything around you is awake for your good, yet you yourself are slumbering even as the fugitive prophet was while the storm was raging.

I am going to speak upon the case of Jonah, first, as we may regard it as *a useful lesson to the people of God;* and, secondly, as it may be considered as *an equally valuable warning to the unconverted.*

I. First, then, I shall use the case of Jonah as A USEFUL LESSON TO THE PEOPLE OF GOD; and I may very fairly do so when we remember who Jonah was.

First, *Jonah was a believer in God.* He worshipped no false god; he worshipped only the living and true God. He was a professed and avowed believer in Jehovah. He was not ashamed to say,—even when his conduct had laid him open to blame, and when there was nobody to support him,—"I am a Hebrew; and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry land." Yet, though he was a believer in God, he was in the sides of the ship, fast asleep. O Christian man,—a real Christian man, too,—if you are in a similar condition, how is it that you can be slumbering under such circumstances? Should not the privileges and the honour, which your being a believer has brought to you by divine grace, forbid that you should be a slumberer, inactive, careless, indifferent? I may be addressing dozens of Jonahs, those who are really God's people, but who are not acting as if they were chosen of the Most High; but are forgetful of their election, their redemption, their sanctification, the life they have begun to live here below, and the eternal glory that awaits them hereafter.

Beside being a believer, or as a natural consequence of being a believer, *Jonah was a man of prayer.* Out of the whole company on board that ship, he was the only man who knew how to pray to the one living and true God. All the mariners "cried every man unto his god." But those were idle prayers because they were offered to idols; they could not prevail because they were presented to dumb, dead deities. But here was a man who could pray,—and who could pray aright, too,—yet he was asleep. Praying men and praying women,—you who have the keys of the kingdom of heaven swinging at your girdle,—you who can ask what you will, and it shall be done for you,—you who have, many a time in the past, prevailed with God in wrestling prayer,—you who

have received countless blessings in answer to your supplications,—can you be, as Jonah was, sleeping in the time of storm? Can it be possible that he, who knows the power of prayer, is restraining it;—that he, to whom God has given this choice privilege, is not availing himself of it? I fear that this may be the case with some of you; and looking at Jonah, a praying man sinfully asleep, I cannot help feeling that I may be speaking to many others who are in exactly the same condition.

More than this, Jonah was not merely a believing man, and a praying man, but *he was also a prophet of the Lord.* He was one to whom God had spoken, and by whom God had spoken. He was a minister; that is to say, one of God's own sent servants, though he was not in his proper place when he was in the ship sailing towards Tarshish. But can God's ministers neglect their duty like this? If I had been asked at that time, "Where is the prophet of the Lord?"—perhaps the only prophet of his age,—at any rate, a man who was the very foremost in his time,—if I had been asked, "Where is he?" I should have said that he must be looked for amidst the masses of the dense population of Nineveh, carrying out his Master's commission with unstaggering faith; or else that he might be looked for amidst the thousands of Israel, denouncing their idol gods and their wicked ways. But who would have thought of finding Jonah asleep on board such a ship as that? He is a seer, yet he sees not, for he is sound asleep. He is a watchman, but he is not watching, for he is slumbering and sleeping. Everything is in confusion; yet this man, upon whom rests the divine anointing, and into whose mouth God has put a message to multitudes of his fellow-creatures, is sleeping instead of witnessing. Come Mr. Preacher, see to yourself while I am talking about Jonah, and I will take the message to myself while I am talking to you; for this is a matter which ought to come home to all of us upon whom such great responsibilities are laid, and to whom such high privileges are given. But all of you, who love the Lord, are witnesses for Christ in some capacity or other; and it would be a very sad thing if you, who are called to speak in the name of the Lord, though it should only be in your Sunday-school class, or in a little cottage meeting, or to your own children, should be asleep when you ought to be wide awake and active. May the Lord awaken you; for you are the wrong person to be asleep! You, above all others, are bound to have both your eyes open, and to watch day and night to hear what God the Lord will speak to you, and what he would have you say to the ungodly or to his own chosen people in his name.

It is also worthy of notice that, at the very time when Jonah was asleep in the ship, he was not only a prophet, but he was *a prophet under a special commission.* He was not on furlough; he was, on the contrary, empowered by special warrant, under the King's seal and sign manual, to go at once to a certain place, and there to deliver the King's message; and yet there he is, asleep in this ship, and going in the very opposite direction to the one given him! When prophets sleep, it should be when their errand has been done, and their message has been delivered; but Jonah had not been on

his Lord's errand, nor had he delivered his Lord's message; nay, he had refused to obey his Lord, and had run away from the path of duty, and here he lies, fast asleep, in the sides of the ship. O dear brothers and sisters, if we could truthfully say that our own work for the Lord was done, we might be somewhat excused if we took our rest. But is our life-work done? Mine is not; that I feel certain; it seems to be scarcely begun. Is yours finished, my brother, my sister? Have you so lived that you can be perfectly content with what you have done? Would it not be a cause of grief to you if you were assured that you would have no more opportunities of glorifying God upon the earth? I think you would feel that very much. Well, then, how can you be willing to be indifferent, cold, and dead, when so much of God's work lies before you scarcely touched as yet? All that you and I have done, so far, has been like apprentice work; we have been just getting our hand in, we have not become journeymen in God's great workshop yet; certainly, we cannot claim to be wise master-builders yet. Few of us, if any, have attained to that degree; so let us not go to sleep. O sir, shame on thee! Asleep in the early morning? A man may take his rest when he gets weary after a long day's toil; but not yet, with all that work to be done,—with the King's commission pressing upon us. With the call of the myriads of Nineveh sounding in his ears, Jonah, God's appointed messenger, should not have been found asleep in the sides of the ship.

This, then, is who the man was. He was a believing man and a praying man, and a prophet, and a prophet under a special commission. But where was he? Where had he got to?

Well, he had gone down into the sides of the ship; that is to say, *he had gone where he hoped he should not be observed or disturbed.* He had gone down into the sides of the ship;—not among the cargo; the mariners threw that overboard, yet the noise did not wake the sleeping prophet. He was not upon the deck, ready to take a turn at keeping watch; but he had got as much out of the way as ever he could; and I have known Christian people try, as far as they could, to get out of the way. Possibly, they are not living inconsistently, or doing, as far as others can see, anything that is glaringly sinful; but they have just retired from their Master's business. They have got into a little quiet place where nobody notices them. I wonder whether there is a Christian man, who has gone to live in a country village, where he has not yet said anything for Christ, although, when he lived in London, he was a busy worker for God. He has, like Jonah, gone down into the sides of the ship, into a quiet place where nobody can see him. Around him there are very few Christian people,—perhaps hardly any,—and he does not want anybody to know that he is a Christian. He would like now to live in quite a private way. If he were asked about himself, he would answer, as Jonah did, "I fear God;" but he does not wish to be asked anything about himself. He does not want people to fix their eyes upon him; he is afraid of being too conspicuous. He says that he always was of a retiring disposition, like the soldier, who ran away as soon as the first shot of

the battle was fired, and so was shot as a deserter. He says that he is like Nicodemus, who came to Jesus by night, or like Joseph of Arimathæa, a disciple, but secretly, for fear of the Jews. He has gone down into the sides of the ship, though, at one time, he was one of the foremost workers for Christ.

He has gone, too, *where he will not lend a hand in any service that needs to be done.* He was in the Sunday-school once, but he says that he has had his turn at that, and does not intend to do anything more. He used to be, perhaps, a deacon of a church, but now he does not wish for such a position as that. He says there is a great deal of trouble and toil in connection with such offices, and he intends, for the future, to avoid everything that will give him trouble, or cause him the slightest toil. Once, he took delight in preaching the Word; and, in those days, if anybody had said that he would live to be silent, and not speak in Christ's name, he would have been very angry at the man who made such a statement; but it has come true now. Jonah is not up on deck helping to hold the rudder, or to set a sail, or to do anything, not even a hand's turn to help the poor labouring vessel. He has gone to sleep in the sides of the ship where nobody enquires about him, at least for the present, and where there is nothing for him to do.

Observe, too, that *Jonah was stopping away from the prayer-meeting.* Do you ask, "What prayer-meeting?" Why, every other man on board that ship was crying unto his god, but Jonah was asleep in the sides of the ship. He was not praying; he was sleeping, and perhaps dreaming, but he was certainly not praying; and it is a very bad thing when a true servant of God, a praying man, and one by whom God has spoken aforetime, begins to get into such a spiritually sleepy state that he not only does nothing to help the church, but he does not even join in prayer in the time of danger. Do you know anybody in such a state as that, my brother? "Yes," you reply, "several." Are you in that state yourself, brother? If so, let charity for people who are doing wrong begin at home; it may extend to others afterwards. But if this cap fits thee, wear it; and wear it till thou wearest it out, and hast improved thyself through wearing it.

This man, asleep in the sides of the ship, represents *one who was not even taking any notice of what was going on around him.* At first, he did not wish to be himself observed; but now, he does not care to observe others. What is the condition of the millions of heathen in foreign lands? That is a subject that he avoids; he is of opinion that they will be converted in the millennium, or that, even if they are not converted, their future lot may be a happy one. At any rate, it is a subject about which he does not concern himself. Jonah is asleep in the sides of the ship, and he appears quite content to let the millions of heathen perish. Then, with regard to the Church of Christ at home, sometimes he is told that everything is prospering, but from other quarters he is informed that we are all going to the bad. Well, he does not know which report is the true one, and he does not particularly care; and, as for the church of which he is a member, does he not care for that?

Well, yes, in a certain fashion; but he does not care enough for the Sunday-school, for instance, to lend a hand there, or for the preaching society to lend a hand there. He never encourages the minister's heart by saying that the love of Christ constraineth him to take his share of holy service. Jonah is asleep in the sides of the ship. He is not much noticed, if at all, for those around him have come to the conclusion that he is good for nothing; and he himself, as I have shown you, does not take much notice of what is going on, though all the while he is a man of God, a man of prayer, and one whom God has used in times past. I wonder whether these descriptions are at all applicable to any of my hearers. At any rate, I know that they represent, as in a mirror, the lives of many professors of religion. We trust they are sincere in heart in the sight of God; but, to us, their sleepiness is more apparent than their sincerity.

Now, further, what was Jonah doing at that time? *He was asleep,—asleep amid all that confusion and noise.* What a hurly-burly there was outside that vessel,—storms raging, billows roaring, —and Jonah was not a sailor, but a landsman, yet he was asleep. Certainly he must have been in a remarkable state to be able to sleep through such a storm as that. And what a noise there was inside the ship as well as outside! Everybody else was crying to his god; and the mariners had been throwing the cargo out of the ship, so they must have stirred the whole place up from one end to the other. There seems to have been scarcely any opportunity for anybody to rest, yet Jonah could sleep right through it all, no matter what noise the men made as they pulled the ropes, or threw out their wares, or what outcries they made as they presented their prayers to their idol gods. Jonah was asleep amid all that confusion and noise; and, O Christian man, for you to be indifferent to all that is going on in such a world as this, for you to be negligent of God's work in such a time as this, is just as strange. The devil alone is making noise enough to wake all the Jonahs if they only want to awake. Then there are the rampant errors of the times, the sins of the times, the confusions of the times, the controversies of the times, all these things ought to wake us. And then, beyond the times, there is eternity, with all its terrors and its glories. There is the dread conflict that is going on between Christ and Belial,—between the true and the false,—between Jesus and antichrist. All around us there is tumult and storm, yet some professing Christians are able, like Jonah, to go to sleep in the sides of the ship. I think, brethren and sisters, if we are spiritually awake, if we only look at the condition of religion in our own country, we shall often be obliged at night to lie awake literally, and toss to and fro, crying, "O God, have mercy upon this distracted kingdom, and let thy truth triumph over the Popery which many are endeavouring to bring back among us!" But, alas! the great multitude of believers have little or no care about this matter; they do not even seem to notice it, for they are sound asleep in the midst of a storm.

Notice, also, that *Jonah was asleep when other people were awake.*

All around us people seem to be wide awake, whether we are asleep or not. When I see what is being done by Romanists, and observe the zeal and self-denial of many persons who have dedicated themselves to the propagation of their false faith, I am astonished that we are doing so little for the true faith. Is it really the case that God has the dullest set of servants in the whole world? It is certain that men are all alive in the service of Satan; then we should not be half alive in the service of our God. Are the worshippers of Baal crying aloud, "O Baal, hear us," and the devotees of Ashtaroth shouting, "Hear us, O mighty Ashtaroth;" and yet the prophet of Jehovah is lying asleep in the sides of the ship? Is it so? Does everything else seem to arouse all a man's energies, but does true religion paralyze them? I have really thought, when I have been reading some books written by very good men, that the best thing for sending a man to sleep was a book by an evangelical writer; but that, the moment a man becomes unsound in the faith, it seems as if he woke up, and had something to say which people were bound to hear. It is a great pity that it should be so, just as it was a great pity that everybody should have been awake on that vessel with the exception of Jonah; yet I fear that it is still only too true that those who serve the living God are not half filled with the arousing fervour which ought to possess them for the honour of the Lord Most High.

Jonah was asleep, next, not only in a time of great confusion, and when others were awake, but also *in a time when he was in great danger*, for the ship was likely to sink. The storm was raging furiously, yet Jonah was asleep. And, believer, when you, and those about you, are in danger of falling into great sin through your careless living,—when your family is in danger of being brought up without the fear of God,—when your servants are in danger of concluding that religion is all a farce because you act as if it were,—when those who watch you in business are apt to sneer at Christian profession because they say that your profession is of very little worth to you,—when all this is taking place, and there is imminent danger to your own soul, and to the souls of others, can you still sleep in unconcern?

And Jonah was asleep *when he was wanted to be awake*. He, above all other men, was the one who ought to awake, and call upon his God. If anybody goes to sleep nowadays, it certainly ought not to be the believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. All things demand that Christians should be in real earnest. I know of no argument that I could gather from time or eternity, from heaven, or earth, or hell, to allow a Christian man to be supine and careless; but if I am asked for reasons why Christians are wanted to be in downright earnest and full of consecrated vigour in the service of God, those arguments are so plentiful that I have no time to mention them all. The world needs you; careless souls need to be awakened; enquiring souls need to be directed; mourning souls need to be comforted; rejoicing souls need to be established; the ignorant need to be taught, the desponding need to be cheered. On all sides, for every Christian man, there is an earnest cry; and,

certainly, in these days, God has made a truly godly man to be more precious than the gold of Ophir; and that man, who keeps himself back from earnest service for God in such a time as this, surely cannot expect the Lord's blessing to rest upon him. Verily, the old curse of Meroz may well be pronounced upon the man who, in this age, and under present circumstances, like Jonah, goes down into the sides of the ship, lies down, and goes to sleep.

Jonah was asleep, with all the heathen around him, upbraiding him by their actions. They were praying while he was sleeping; and, at last, it came to this,—that the shipmaster sternly addressed the prophet of God, and said, "What meanest thou, O sleeper?" It is sad indeed when things have come to such a pass that a heathen captain rebukes a servant of God; and yet I am afraid that the Church of God, if she does not mend her ways, will have a great many similar rebukes from heathen practices and heathen utterances. Look at the enormous sums that the heathen spend upon their idols and their idol temples and worship, and then think how little we spend upon the service of the living God. One is amazed to read of the lacs of rupees that are given by Indian princes for the worship of their dead deities; and yet our missionary societies languish, and the work of God in a thousand ways is stopped, because God's stewards are not using what he has entrusted to them as they should. Think, too, of the flaming zeal with which the votaries of false faiths compass sea and land to make one proselyte, while we do so little to bring souls to Jesus Christ. One of these days you will have Hindoos and Brahmins talking to us in this fashion, "You profess that the love of Christ constrains you, but to what does it constrain you?" They even now ask us what kind of religion must ours be that forces opium upon the poor Chinese. They quote our great national sins against us, and I do not wonder that they do. I only wish that they could be told that Christians reprobate those evils, and that they are not Christians who practise them. But we must do more than even the best Christians are now doing, or else we shall have the heathen saying, as the semi-heathen at home do say, "If we believed in eternal punishment, we should be earnest day and night to rescue souls from it,"—which is to me a strong corroboration of the truth of that doctrine. We do not want any doctrine that can make us less zealous than we are. We certainly do not want any doctrine that can give us any excuse for want of zeal. Still, there is great force in the remark I quoted just now. We are not as earnest to save men from going down to the pit as we ought to be if we do indeed believe that they are hastening to that doom. The shipmasters are again rebuking the Jonahs. Those who believe in error, those who worship false gods, turn round upon us, and ask us what we mean. O Jonah, sleeping Jonah, is it not time that you were awake?

But why was Jonah asleep? I suppose that it was partly the reaction after the excitement through which his mind had passed in rebelling against God. He had wearied himself with seeking his own evil way; so now, after the disobedience to God of which

he had been guilty, his spirit sinks, and he sleeps. Besides, it is according to the nature of sin to give—not physical sleep, I grant you,—but to give spiritual slumber. There is no opiate like the commission of an evil deed. A man, who has done wrong, is so much less able to repent of the wrong, so much the less likely to do so. Jonah's conscience had become hardened by his wilful rejection of his Lord's commands, and therefore he could sleep when he ought to have been aroused and alarmed.

Besides, he wished to get rid of the very thought of God. He was trying to flee from God's presence. I suppose he could not bear his own thoughts; they must have been dreadful to him. So, being in a pet against his God, and altogether in a wrong spirit, he hunts about for a snug corner of the ship, stretches himself out, and there falls asleep, and sleeps on right through the storm. O sleepy Christian, there is something wrong about you, too! Conscience has been stupefied. There is some darling sin, I fear, that you are harbouring. Search it out, and drive it out. Sin is the mother of this shameful indifference. God help thee to get rid of it! Brother, I am speaking to you with as much directness as I possibly can, yet not with more than I use towards myself. Have I, in my preaching, been slumbering and sleeping? If you find that I am not in earnest, I charge you, my brother in Christ, tell me of it, and wake me out of my sleep if you can, as I now tell you of it, and say, by all that God has done to you in saving you by his grace, and in making you his servant, give not up your soul to slumber, but awake, awake, put on strength, and arouse yourself, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to prayer and to the service of your God.

Thus I have spoken, perhaps at too great length, to Christians.

II. Now, more briefly, I want to give A WARNING TO THE UNCONVERTED.

Jonah, asleep on board that ship, is a type of a great number of unconverted people who come to our various places of worship. Jonah was in imminent danger, for God had sent a great storm after him; and, my unconverted hearer, *your danger, at this present moment, is beyond description.* There is nothing but a breath between you and hell. One of our beloved elders was with us here last Sabbath day; he is now with the spirits of just men made perfect; but if it had been the lot of any unconverted person here to suffer and to expire in the same manner, alas, how sad it would have been for you, my hearer! Driven from the presence of God, you would be cast into the outer darkness where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. The sword of divine justice is already furbished, will you yet make mirth? Can you laugh and jest when there is but a step between you and death,—but a step between you and hell? An enemy to God, unforgiven, the angel of justice seeking you out as the storm sought out Jonah in that ship, "What meanest thou, O sleeper," when the peril of everlasting wrath is so near thee?

You are asleep, too, *when there are a great many things to awake you.* As I have already said, there was a great noise in the vessel

where Jonah was, a great noise inside and outside the ship, yet he did not awake. I do believe that many of you, unconverted people, find it hard to remain as you are. You get hard blows, sometimes, from the preacher. At family prayer, often, your conscience is touched. When you hear a passage from the Bible read, or when you hear of a friend who has died, you get somewhat aroused. Why, the very conversion of others should surely awaken you. If nothing else had awoke Jonah, the prayers of the mariners ought to have awakened him; and the earnestness of your mother and father, the pleading of your sister, the cries of new converts, the earnest anxieties of enquirers, ought to have—and if you were not so deeply sunken in slumber, would have—some influence over you to arouse you.

You are asleep, brother, *while prayer would save you.* If your prayers could not be heard, I think I should say, "Let him sleep on." If there were no possibility of your salvation, I do not see why you should be aroused from your slumbers. Despair is an excellent excuse for sloth; but you have no reason to despair. "Arise, call upon thy God," said the shipmaster to Jonah; and we say to you, "Friend, how is it that you are so indifferent, and do not pray, when it is written, 'Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find;' and when the facts prove the truth of the words of Jesus, 'for he that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth'?" Heaven is within your reach, yet you will not stretch out your hand. Eternal life is so nigh to thee that Paul writes, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." Assuredly, that man, who has food heaped up before him, but who sits down, and goes to sleep with his head in Benjamin's mess, and yet will not eat of it, deserves to be starved. He, who can slumber when the river runs up to his very lip; he who is dying of thirst, yet will not drink, deserves to die; does he not? With such wondrous blessings set before you in the gospel,—with heaven itself just yonder, and the pearly gates set wide open, yet you are so indifferent that you despise the good land, and murmur, and refuse to accept the Saviour who would lead you to it,—why, surely, you must be sleeping the sleep of death! You are sleeping while God's people are wondering at you, just as those mariners in the ship wondered at Jonah; and while they are weeping over you, and praying for you. There are some, in this place, who are the constant subjects of prayer. Some of you, who are seated here, do not perhaps know it; but there are those who love you, and who mention your name day and night before God; and yet, while they are concerned about you, you are not concerned about yourself. O God, if storms cannot awaken these sleeping Jonahs, awaken them by some other means, even though it be by one like themselves, or one even worse than themselves! Send a message that shall upbraid them. Set some blasphemer to ask them how they can attend the means of grace, and yet be undecided. I have known that to happen. I have known a coarse, vile-living man to accost a moral and excellent attendant on the means of grace, and say to

him, "Why are you not either one thing or the other? If religion is all a lie, why don't you be as I am; but if it is true, why don't you become a Christian?" And verily may they put such questions as those to some of you.

O friends, I pray you, if you are out of Christ, do not pretend to be happy! Do not accept any happiness till you find it in him. To some of you, I would speak very pointedly. Are you sick? Do you feel that your life is very precarious? O my dear friend, you are like Jonah when the ship was like to be broken. Do not delay. Are there the beginnings of consumption about you? Is it supposed to be so? Do not delay. Has some relative been taken away, and does there seem some likelihood that you may have the same disease? Oh, do not sleep, but awake! Are you getting old, friend? Are the grey hairs getting thick around your brow? Oh, do not delay! For unsaved young people, it is wrong to sleep, for he that sleeps when he is young sleeps during a siege; but he that slumbers when he is old sleeps during the attack, when the enemy is actually at the breach, and storming the walls. Do any of you work in dangerous trades? Do you have to earn your bread where an accident might easily happen, as it has often happened to others? Oh, be prepared to meet your God!

But, having begun this list, I might continue it almost indefinitely; but I will end it in a sentence or so. *Are you a mortal man? Can* you die? *Will* you die? May you die *now?* May you drop dead in the street? May you go to sleep, and never wake up again on earth? May your very food or drink become the vehicle of death to you? May there be death in the air you breathe? May it be so? Will you one day, at any rate, have to be carried to your long home, like others, and lie asleep in the grave? Will you give account to God for the things done in the body? Will you have to stand before the great white throne, to make one of that innumerable throng, and to be there put into the balance to be weighed for eternity? If so, sleep not, I beseech you, as do others; but bestir yourself. May God's Holy Spirit bestir you to make your calling and election sure! Lay hold on Jesus Christ with the grip of an earnest, humble faith, and surrender yourself, henceforth, to the service of him who has bought you with his precious blood. God grant to all of us the grace to awake, and arise, that Christ may give us life and light, for his dear name's sake! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

PSALM LI.

Verses 1—5. *Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me throughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest. Behold I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.*

"It is not merely that I have sinned in practice, but I am a sinner by nature. Sin would not have come out of me if it had not first been in me. I am a mass of sin, and must therefore be loathsome in thy sight."

6, 7. *Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom. Purge me with hyssop,—*

Take the bunch of hyssop as the priests did; dip it into the basin filled with sacrificial blood: "Purge me with hyssop." Apply the precious blood of Jesus to me,—

7, 8. *And I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice.*

He feels like a man whose bones are broken, and he asks the Lord, by putting away his sin, to bind up those broken bones till every one of them should sing a song of gratitude to the Divine Healer.

9—13. *Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee.*

"If thou wilt only save me, I will tell everybody about it; I will be a preacher as well as a penitent. Rising from my knees, where I have been confessing my sin, rejoicing that thou hast blotted it all out, I will hasten away, and tell to others what a good God thou art, and they will believe my testimony, 'and sinners shall be converted unto thee.'"

14. *Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God,—*

David had been guilty of the death of Uriah. It is a proof of his sincerity that he does not mince matters, but calls a spade a spade, and prays, "Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God,"—

14. *Thou God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness.*

"I will not only preach, but I will also sing. I will be precentor as well as preacher. A Christian man can never do too much for the Lord who has so graciously pardoned him. David feels that he cannot do anything aright, either singing or preaching, by himself; so he adds,—

15. *O LORD, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise. For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering.*

God cares little for the mere outward forms of worship; Ritualistic observances are nothing to him: "Thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering." Though these were the fixed ordinances of the Lord under which David lived, yet he was enabled to look beyond them to something higher and better.

17—19. *The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise. Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion: build thou the walls of Jerusalem. Then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering: then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar.*

When we come to God, and are saved by him, then ordinances take their proper place. You cannot teach a man how to live until he is born; and you cannot teach him what his spiritual life is to be until he is born again; all religious rites and ceremonies which precede the new birth go for nothing. First there must be the inward life, the broken heart, the contrite spirit, and then everything else drops into proper order. Mind this; God help us all to mind it well!

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE PLUMBLINE.

A Sermon

PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 6TH, 1904,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, August 27th, 1876.

"Thus he shewed me: and, behold, the Lord stood upon a wall made by a plumbline, with a plumbline in his hand. And the LORD said unto me, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A plumbline. Then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumbline in the midst of my people Israel: I will not again pass by them any more."—Amos vii. 7, 8.

GOD usually speaks by men according to their natural capacity. Amos was a herdsman. He was not a man of noble and priestly rank, like Ezekiel, nor a man of gigantic intellect and mighty eloquence, like Isaiah. He was a simple herdsman, and therefore God did not cause him to see the visions of Isaiah, or dazzle his mind with the wondrous revelations that were given to Ezekiel. God's rule is, "Every man in his own order;" and if we depart from that, we get out of place ourselves, and we are apt to try to make others do that which they are not fit to do, and then blame them when they fail to accomplish what they should never have attempted. God always uses his servants in the best possible way, and as they ought to be used; so, when the herdsman Amos had a vision, he simply saw a piece of string with a plumb of lead at the bottom of it,—a plumbline,—a thing which he could easily understand. There was a mystery about the vision, but the vision itself was not mysterious. It was a very simple emblem indeed, exactly suited to the mind of Amos, just as the visions of Ezekiel and Isaiah were adapted to the more poetic minds of men of another class. You and I, dear brethren, may be very thankful if God should use us as he did Amos; and, if he does, we must not be aping the Isaiahs and Ezekiels. If we see a plumbline, let us preach about a plumbline; and if God should ever enable us to understand the visions of Zechariah or Ezekiel, then let us preach about them. Let every preacher or teacher testify according to the measure of light and grace that God has given him; then we shall do well. Amos can see a plumbline, and he sees it well; and when he has seen it, he

tells out what he has seen, and leaves God to set his seal upon his testimony.

Now, on this occasion, we have nothing before us but this plumbline, but there is a great deal to be learnt from it. The first thing is this, *the plumbline is used in construction;* secondly, *the plumbline is used for testing what is built;* and, thirdly, it appears from the text that *the plumbline is used in the work of destruction*, for the casting down of that which is found not to be straight.

I. First, THE PLUMBLINE IS USED IN CONSTRUCTION. We are told, in the text, that "the Lord stood upon a wall made by a plumbline," that is to say, a wall which had been constructed with the help of a plumbline; and, therefore, he tested it with that which was supposed to have been used in its construction, which was a fair and proper thing to do. If the wall only professed to be run up without a plumbline, then it might be hard to try it with the plumbline; but as it was a wall which professed to have been constructed according to the rules of the builder's art, it was fair and reasonable that it should be tested by the plumbline.

First, then, dear friends, a plumbline is used in building when it is done as it ought to be; and I remind you that *God always uses it in his building.* Everything that God builds is built plumb, and straight, and square, and fair. You see that rule at work in nature; there is nothing out of proportion there. Those who understand these things, and look deeply into them, will tell you that the very form and size of the earth have a connection with the blooming of a flower, or the hanging of a dew-drop upon a blade of grass; and that, if the sun were larger or smaller than it is, or if the material of which the earth is formed were more dense, or different in any degree from what it is, then everything, the most magnificent and the most minute, would be thrown out of gear. Someone of old used to say that God is the great Arithmetician, the great Master of geometry; and so he is. He never makes any mistakes in his calculations; there is not anything in the world that he has made in a careless manner. The mixing of the component parts of the air we breathe is managed with consummate skill; and if you could resolve a drop of water into its original elements, you would be struck by the wisdom with which God has adapted the proportions of each particle so as to make a liquid which man can drink. Everything is done by order and rule, as in the changes of the various seasons, the movements of the heavenly bodies, and the arrangements of divine providence. God always has the plumbline in his hand. He never begins to build, as a careless workman would, that which might turn out to be right, or might turn out to be wrong; but he makes sure work of all that he does.

In spiritual matters, it is very manifest that, whenever God is dealing with souls, he always uses the plumbline. In beginning with us, he finds that the very foundation of our nature is out of the perpendicular; and, therefore, he does not attempt to build upon it, but commences his operations by digging it out. The first work of divine grace in the soul is to pull down all that nature has built up. God says, "I cannot use these stones in my building.

This man has been behaving himself admirably in some respects, and he thinks that he is building up a temple to my honour and glory with his own natural virtues, his own good works, and other things of a like character. But all this must be dug out." The man has taken a great deal of pains in putting it together, but it must all come out, and there must be a great hole left; the man must feel himself emptied, and abased, and humbled in the sight of God; for, if God is to be everything to the man, then he himself must be nothing; and if Christ is to be his Saviour, he must be a complete Saviour, from beginning to end. So, the foundation of human merit must be cleared right out, and flung away, for God could not build squarely upon it. With such a foundation as that, the plumbline would never mark a perpendicular wall.

After all human merit has been flung out, the Lord begins his gracious work by laying the foundation stone of a simple faith in Jesus Christ, and that faith, though simple, is very real. When a man professes to convert his fellow-man, he only gives him a fictitious faith which is of no value to him; but when God saves a sinner, he gives him real faith. There may be little knowledge of the truth, but the little that the man knows is truth; and faith, though it be but as a grain of mustard seed, if it be of the right sort, is better than that faith which is as big as a mountain, yet all of the wrong sort, which will not stand in the time of testing. But the faith, which the Holy Spirit gives, is the faith of God's elect, the real faith which will endure even the tests which God applies to it.

Side by side with that faith, God puts true repentance. When a man attempts to convert his fellow-man, he gives him a sham repentance, or perhaps he tells him that there is no need of any repentance at all. Certain preachers have been telling us, lately, that it is a very easy matter to obtain salvation, and that there is no need of repentance; or if repentance is needed, it is merely a change of mind. That is not the doctrine that our fathers used to preach, nor the doctrine that we have believed. That faith, which is not accompanied by repentance, will have to be repented of; so, whenever God builds, he builds repentance fair and square with faith. These two things go together; the man just as much regrets and grieves over the past as he sees that past obliterated by the precious blood of Jesus. He just as much hates all his sin as he believes that his sin has been all put away.

The Lord never builds anything falsely in any man, or teaches him to reckon that to be true which is not true; but he builds with facts, with substantial verities, with true grace, and with a real and lasting work in the soul. When the Lord builds in a man, he builds with the plumbline in the sense of always building up that which is towards holiness. Have any of you fallen into sin? Rest assured that God did not build you in that way. Have sinful desires and lustings after evil been excited within you by any doctrine to which you have listened? Then, you may be sure that it was not of God. "By their fruits shall ye know them," is an infallible test of doctrines as well as of disciples; and if any of you

have embraced any form of doctrine which hinders you from being watchful, prayerful, careful, and anxious to avoid sin, you have embraced error, and not truth, for all God's building tends towards holiness, towards carefulness, towards a gracious walk to the praise and glory of God. When the Lord builds a man up, he makes him conscientious, makes him jealous of himself, makes him detect the very shadow of sin, so that, before the sin itself comes upon him, he holds up his all-covering shield of faith, that he may be preserved from its deadly assaults. You may always know God's building because it is pure building, clean building; but if anybody builds you up in such a style that you can talk of sin as a trifle, and think that you may indulge in it, at least in a measure, with impunity, that is certainly not God's building.

And, blessed be his name, when our souls are really given up into the Lord's hands, he will continue to build in us until he has built us up to perfection. There will come a day when sin, which now makes its nest in this mortal body of ours, shall find this body dissolving and crumbling back to the earth of which it was made; and then our emancipated spirits, delivered from the last taint and trace of sin,—free from even the tendency to evil,—shall soar away to be with Christ, which is far better, and to wait for the trumpet of the resurrection, when the body itself shall also be delivered from corruption, for the grave is a refining pot; and, at the coming of Christ, our body shall be pure and white, like the garments of a bride arrayed to meet her bridegroom, and the soul, re-united with the body, shall have triumphed over every sin. This is the way that God builds. He does not build us up so that we can go to heaven with our sin still working in us. He does not build us up to be temples for him to dwell in, and let the devil also dwell in us. Antinomian building is not according to the fashion of God's building; but God builds up surely, solidly, truthfully, sincerely, and until we have reached that state of perfection which makes us fit for heaven.

Now, beloved, as God thus uses the plumbline in his building, I gather that *we also should use the plumbline in our building*. First, with regard to the upbuilding of our own soul, I would urge upon myself first, and then upon you next, the constant use of the plumbline. It is very easy to seek after speed, but to neglect to ensure certainty. There is such a thing as being in a dreadful hurry to do what had better never be done, or else be done in a very different style. We see some people, who become Christians in about two minutes; and I am devoutly thankful when that is really the case. We see some others become full-grown Christians in about two days, and instructors of others in the course of a week; and, very speedily, they attain to such vast dimensions that there is no ordinary church that is big enough to hold them. That is very quick work; that is the way that mushrooms grow, but it is not the way that oaks grow. I urge you all to remember that, often, the proverb "the more haste, the less speed," is true in spiritual things as well as in temporal. My dear brother, if you only grow an inch in the course of ten laborious years, yet that

growth is real, it is better than appearing to grow six feet in an hour, when that would only be disease puffing you up, and blowing you out. Often and often, the soul needs to use the plumbline to see whether that which is built so very quickly is really built perpendicularly, or whether it does not lean this way or that. As the work goes on, we should frequently stop, and say to ourselves, "Now, is this right? Is this real? Is this true?" Many a time, if we did that, we should have to fall upon our knees, and cry, "O Lord, deliver me from exalting myself above measure, and counting myself to be rich and increased with goods, when, all the while, I am wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."

I would like you young men who are here to use the plumbline when you begin your spiritual life-building. I mean this; your father and mother are members of a certain church, but do not you, therefore, go and join that church without a thorough investigation of the principles on which it is founded. Use the plumbline to see whether it is all straight and square. Try all the doctrines that are taught, and do not embrace that which is popular, but that which is Biblical. Then, try with the plumbline the ordinances of the church; do not submit to them simply because other people do so, but use the plumbline of Scripture to test them all. You know that, as a body, we are not afraid that you will ever read your Bibles too much. We, as Baptists, have no objection to your bringing everything that is taught to the test of the Bible, for we know that we should be the gainers if you were to do that; but, instead of using the plumbline of the Bible, many people have a newly-invented test,—the Book of Common Prayer, or Minutes of the Conference, or something else equally valueless. Now, whatever respect I have for books of that sort, I prize my Bible infinitely above them all, and above all the volumes of decretals of popes, and councils, and conferences put together. I should not like to feel that I had been building, and building, and building, and building, and yet that there had been a radical error in the whole structure, for I had commenced with a mistake, and I had been building myself up, not in the most holy faith of the apostles, but in the most mischievous error of my own notions. Do, I pray you, apply the Bible plumbline continually to all your beliefs, and views, and practices.

But, even before you do that, use the gospel plumbline to see whether you really were ever born again, for our Lord Jesus said to Nicodemus, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Do test yourselves as to whether you have really believed in Jesus Christ, for "without faith it is impossible to please God;" and if you have believed in him, take care that, while you think you are getting more faith, more love, more patience, more of every grace, you keep the plumbline going; otherwise, you may get a great deal into the structure that you will have to take out again, and you will get the building out of the perpendicular, and the whole of it may come down with a crash.

And this plumbline is also to be used upon all work that is done on behalf of other people. There is much teaching, which

has been given with a pure motive, but which, nevertheless, cannot endure this test. There are some little sects, still existing upon the face of the earth, that were formed with much labour by their originators; but they are evidently not gold, or silver, or precious stones, for they are passing away with the lapse of time. I would like, as a minister of the gospel, to do for God that which will endure the supreme test of the day of judgment. I should not like to build up a great church here, and then, when I was dead and gone, for it to be scattered to the four winds, and to learn in heaven that I had been mistaken except as to the matter of my own salvation; and that, consequently, while some good was done, there was ill done as well. No; we must constantly use the plumbline, so that what we build may be perpendicular, and may stand the test of the ages, and the test of God's great judgment seat. Look to it, sirs, ye who are diligent, that ye are diligent in spreading truth, and not error. See to it, ye who count up your many converts, that they are real converts, and not the mere fruit of excitement. See to it, ye who plod on from day to day so industriously seeking to save souls, that they are really saved, and truly brought to Christ; for, if not, your work will be in vain. Churches that are built in a hurry will come down in a hurry; wood, hay, and stubble, that look all right in the building, will look terrible in the burning, when the day of the trial by fire shall come.

So that is our first point, that the plumbline is to be used in the construction of the building.

II. Secondly, THE PLUMBLINE IS TO BE USED FOR TESTING THE BUILDING WHEN IT IS BUILT.

Do not let us judge either ourselves or one another simply by the eye. I have frequently thought that a building was out of the perpendicular when it was not; and I have sometimes thought it perpendicular when it really was not so. The human eye is readily deceived, but the plumbline is not; it drops straight down, and at once shows whether the wall is upright or not. *We must continually use upon ourselves the plumbline of God's Word.* Here is a wall that needs to be tested,—the wall of self-righteousness. This man thinks he is all right. He never did anything very wrong. Moreover, he is religious in his way. He says that he has kept the law from his youth up. That is a fine piece of wall, is it not?—with some very handsome stones inlaid therein with fair colours. You are very proud of it, my dear friend; but if I put the Bible plumbline to your life, you will be astonished to find how much out of the perpendicular it is. The plumbline is according to this standard, "If any man will be saved by his own works, he must keep the law of the Lord perfectly; for he, who is guilty of the breach of any one of God's commandments, has broken the whole law: 'therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight.'" That condemns your wall, does it not?—because you have not at all times kept the whole law in the fulness of the meaning which Christ gave to it. If you are to be saved by works, there must not be a single flaw in the whole wall of your life. If there is, it is not in the perpendicular.

Here is another wall, built by a man who says that he is doing his best, and trusting to Christ to make up for his deficiencies. Well, my dear friend, your wall is sadly out of the perpendicular, because there is a text which says, "Christ is all;" and I know that the Lord Jesus Christ will never be willing to be put side by side with such a poor creature as you are, to be jointly used with yourself to your soul's salvation. Remember that, in the gospel plan, it is not Christ and Co.; it must be all Christ, or no Christ at all. So, if you are depending partly upon self, and partly upon him, my plumbline shows that your wall is out of the perpendicular, and that it will have to come down.

Another man is depending upon rites and ceremonies. Now, there are some very strong texts in Scripture concerning that matter. Here is one: "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." Wilt thou come before God bringing the blood of beasts or costly offerings? Hath he not told thee that, to come before him with a broken and a contrite heart, and, especially, to come unto him through the merit of the one great sacrifice offered by his Son, is the only acceptable way of approaching him? The most gorgeous ceremonies in the whole world cannot save a single soul. That wall is out of the perpendicular, and must come down.

Here is another man, who says, "I am, as often as I can be, a hearer of the Word." I am glad that you are; but if you are only a hearer, and not a doer of the Word, your wall is out of the perpendicular; for, if it is good to hear what is right, it is better still to do it; and your condemnation will be all the more terrible if you have known what you ought to do, and yet have not done it. There are many of you, who come here, and who have been coming for a long time, who, I hope, will be led to do much more than simply come to hear; for I trust that you will be led, by the Holy Spirit, to lay hold on eternal life. If not, your wall will not endure the test of the Bible plumbline, which plainly shows that you are quite out of the perpendicular.

There are many other bowing walls, beside those I have mentioned, but I cannot stop to try them now. I would, however, most earnestly urge you all to remember that, if you do not test yourself by the plumbline of God's Word, *if you are God's servant, you will be tried and tested.* Have you never known what it is to be laid aside, on a bed of sickness, and to have everything about you tried? In times of acute pain, I have had every morsel of what I thought to be gold and silver put into the fire, piece by piece, by the Master himself, until he has put it all in. Thank God, some of it has been proved to be gold; and has come out all the brighter for the testing; but, oh, how much of it has proved to be alloy, or even worthless dross! You can have a great deal of patience when you have not any pain; and you can have a great deal of joy in the Lord when you have got joy in your worldly prosperity; and you can have any quantity of it when you have no troubles to test its reality. But the real faith is that which will endure the trial by fire. The real patience is that which will bear intense agony without a murmur of complaint. The Lord will test and try

you, my brother, sooner or later, if you are his. He will be sure to use the plumbline, so you had better use it yourself. It may save you much anxiety in the future if you stop now to question yourself, and to enquire whether these things be real and true to you or not.

And remember, once more, that *God will use the plumbline, at the last great day, to test everything.* How many of us could hear, without a tremor, the intimation that God had summoned us to appear before his bar? O my brethren and sisters, if the great scales of divine justice were swinging from this ceiling now, and the Judge of all said to you, "Step in, and let me see what is your weight," is there one of us who could solemnly and sincerely rise, and say, "Lord, I am ready for the weighing"? Yes; I trust that many could say, each one for himself or herself, "There is not anything good in me, but my hope is fixed on Christ alone; and though I am not what I ought to be, nor what I want to be, nor what I shall be, yet 'by the grace of God I am what I am.' My profession of being a Christian is not a lie, it is not a pretence, it is not a piece of religious masquerade; it is true, great God; it is true." My brother, my sister, if you can say that, you may step into the scales without any fear, for the contrite and believing heart can endure being weighed. But into the scales you will have to go whether you are ready or not. Your building will all have to be tested and tried. Some of you have built fine mansions, and towers, and palaces; but the plumbline will be applied to them all, and it is God himself who will use the plumbline in every case. No counterfeit will be allowed to pass the pearly gates, nor anything that defileth, or worketh abomination, or maketh a lie. At the last great day, none shall pass from beneath the eye of the Judge of all without due examination. He will not suffer even one of the guilty to escape, nor condemn any one of those who have been absolved for Christ's sake. It will be a right and just judgment that will be given in that day; but judgment there will be.

III. My last point is this, THE PLUMBLINE IS USED IN THE WORK OF DESTRUCTION.

When a city wall was to be battered down, the general would sometimes say, "This wall is to be taken down to this point, and then the plumbline was hung down to mark how far they were to go with the work of destruction. They thus marked out that part which might be spared, and that which must be destroyed.

Now, in the work of destruction, God always uses the plumbline, and *he goes about that work very slowly.* He shows that he does not like it. When the Lord is going to save a sinner, he has wings to his feet; but when he is going to destroy a sinner, he goes with leaden footsteps, waiting, and warning many times, and while he waits and warns, sighing, and crying, "How shall I give thee up?" He even goes so far as to use an oath, saying, "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live." God never brings men to judgment, as the infamous Judge Jeffreys did, in a great haste. He would hurry them off to the gallows, with indecent speed; but,

at the last great day, there will be a solemn and stately pomp about the whole dread assize,—the sounding of the trumpet, the bursting of the graves, the setting up of the great white throne, the opening of the books, and the majestic appearance of him from whose face heaven and earth will flee away. And when the judgment begins, it will not be without due order, nor will it be without keen perception of all differences. There will hang the infallible plumbline. That which is perpendicular will be declared to be perpendicular, and that which bows will be shown tottering to its fall; for, before the Judge's eye, and before the eyes of the assembled universe, shall hang a plumbline, with these words above it, "He which is filthy, let him be filthy still; . . . and he that is holy, let him be holy still."

The whole judgment shall be according to the plumbline. *Not a soul, in that great day, will be sent to hell who does not deserve to go there.* If there be any man, who can plead that it would be unjust to condemn him,—if he can truthfully prove that he has been obedient up to the measure of his light,—if he can prove that justice is on his side,—God will not do an unjust turn to him, or to any other man. Those awful gates, that grind upon their iron hinges, never yet opened to receive a soul damned unjustly. It would be impossible, in the very nature of things, for such a thing to happen. If any man could truly say, "This is unjust," he would have taken away the sting of hell, for this is the essence and the soul of hell, "I am wrong, and can never get right. I am wrong, and do not want to get right; I am so wrong that I love the wrong, and make evil to be my good, and good to be my evil. I hate God, for it is impossible, while I am in such a state as this, that I can be otherwise than unhappy; and this is the greatest hell that can happen to a man,—not to love God, and not to love right." That is the flame of hell, the worm that gnaws for ever,—that being out of gear with God,—that being out of harmony with the Most High for ever. I ween that there needs to be no fiercer hell than that. So, the final judgment will be according to the plumbline, so that no one will be condemned unjustly. You talk to me about the fate of the heathen who have never heard the gospel, and I reply, "I know very little about them; but I know that God is just, so I leave them in his hands, knowing that the Judge of all the earth will do right." There will not be one pang, to a soul in hell, more than that soul deserves,—not a single spasm of despair, or a sinking in hopelessness, that is imposed by the arbitrary will of God. It will be a terrible reaping for them, when they reap sheaves of fire; but they will only reap what they have sown. There will be an awful pouring out of divine vengeance upon the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction; but no one will be able to say that the judgment is unjust. The lost will themselves feel that they only have to eat as they baked, and to drink as they brewed. It will all be just to them; and this is what will make the teeth of the serpent of hell, and the flame of its fire,—that it is all just,—that if I were myself judge, I must condemn myself to what I have to suffer. Think of that, and escape from the wrath to come.

And as that plumbline hangs there, in that great day of account, *there will be differences made between some lost men and other lost men.* All hell is not the same hell, any more than all flesh is the same flesh. That man knew his Lord's will, and did it not; lay on the lashes to the full that the law allows. That other man did not obey his Lord's will; but then, he did not know it, so he shall be beaten with few stripes. Few will be too many for anyone to bear; so do not run the risk of them. But, oh, the many stripes, what will they be? There are the lost that perished in Sodom and Gomorrah,—those filthy beings whose sins we dare not think upon. There they are, and there is the hell they suffer. There hangs the plumbline; and, by his unerring justice, God awards their doom. But what will he award to you, and you, and you, who have heard the gospel simply and plainly preached, and yet have rejected Christ? You will have to go lower down in hell than the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, for God's plumbline tells us that sin against light is the worst of sin, and that the wilful rejection of the atoning blood flowing from the loving Saviour's wounds, is the climax of all iniquity. That is how the plumbline will work. And when you come up, you rich man, who have spent your money in sin,—and when you come up, you poor man, who work so hard,—there shall be a difference between the one of you and the other,—between the seducer, whom the world allows to enter into her drawing-room, and the poor girl whom he led astray; for, though both are guilty, God will make a difference, not as men make it here, but quite the other way. The man of talent, and of rank, and of position, who frittered away his whole existence in the life of a butterfly,—there will be a difference between his sentence and that of the obscure, uneducated individual, who did sin, but not as he did who had the greater gifts. To put one talent in a napkin, brings its due punishment; but to bury or misuse ten talents, shall bring a tenfold doom; for there will hang that plumbline, and by the rules of infinite justice everything shall be determined.

"This is dreadful talk," some of you may be saying. It is; it is; and it is a dreadful business altogether for the lost,—that being driven from God's presence when you die,—hearing him say, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." You do not like to hear about this, and I do not like to preach about it; only I must do so, lest you come unto that place of torment because I failed to warn you. Then might you say, in your despair, "O cursed preacher! O unfaithful minister! You tried to tickle our ears with pleasant things, but you left out all allusions to the wrath to come. You toned down the truth, you softened it, and now we are ruined for ever through your wicked desire to please our foolish ears." O sirs, you will never be able truthfully to say that, for I do pray you to escape from that awful future. Run no risk of it. I think every one of you would like to have his house insured against fire, and to know that, as far as proper title-deeds go, whatever you have is held on a good tenure. Then, I implore you, make sure work for eternity by laying hold on

Christ Jesus. Yield yourself up to him, that he may make you right where you are wrong, put you in gear with God, and set you running parallel with the will of the Most High; that he, indeed, may build you up on the perpendicular, on the solid foundation of his eternal merits by faith, through the power of the ever-blessed Spirit,—that you may be so built that, when God himself holds the plumbline, it may hang straight down, and he will be able to say, "It is all right." Happy will you be if you hear his verdict, "Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful in a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things. Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

May God grant this mercy to every one of you, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

1 CORINTHIANS III.

Verse 1. *And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ.*

Their spiritual part had not grown strong, their old carnal nature still had the preponderance, so Paul was obliged to address that which was the bigger half of them.

2. *I have fed you with milk,*

That is a blessing.

2. *And not with meat:*

That is not a blessing. It is a great privilege to be fed even with the simple doctrines of grace, with the milk of the gospel; but it is a higher boon to have such a spiritual constitution as to be able to eat the strong meat of the Word.

2, 3. *For hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?*

As ordinary, unregenerate men.

4. *For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?*

Is not this just how common, ordinary men would do? Where is your spiritual-mindedness if you so act?

5. *Who then is Paul?*

Mark, it is Paul himself who asks this question. He puts his own name here in order to show that he does not despise Apollos any more than he despises himself.

5—9. *Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour. For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry.*

Ye are God's tilled ground.

Then the apostle works out the same thought under another image, turning from agriculture to architecture.

9, 10. *Ye are God's building. According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon.*

Paul began the churches; he was the first preacher of the gospel in Corinth, and also in other places; and other preachers followed in his footsteps. When a man lays a good foundation, he always feels anxious that those who come after him should build in the same substantial manner as he has begun. It is a great grief to a man if he sees that, after he has laid a foundation of truth, somebody else follows, and builds up an error on the top of it. Alas, men do that still sometimes.

10—15. *But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.*

If he be a good man, he builds for God; though he may build mistakenly, and say much that he ought not to have said. He shall escape, as a man flies out of a burning house, but all his work is gone. What a dreadful thing that would be, at the end of life, to get into heaven, but to have seen that all your life's work had been a failure; to have been building a great deal, but to see it all burned; or to know, as you die, that because it was not God's truth, it would all be burned!

16, 17. *Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man destroy the temple of God,—*

For so it should run,—

17. *Him shall God destroy;*

If any man should pull down that which Paul built for God, if any man shall pull down that which any faithful minister of Christ has built before him, "him shall God destroy;"

17, 18. *For the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are. Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise.*

For that kind of folly is the doorstep of true wisdom.

19. *For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God.*

All that which calls itself philosophy, and talks about its culture, and so on, is foolishness with God, just as much to-day as it was among the Greeks.

19. *For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness.*

They call themselves wise, but they shall all be taken in their own craftiness.

20, 21. *And again, The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain. Therefore let no man glory in men.*

Men are poor things to glory in.

21, 23. *For all things are your's; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are your's; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's.*

Glory be to his holy name!

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Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

FELLOWSHIP WITH THE FATHER AND THE SON.

A Sermon

PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 13TH, 1904,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, September 3rd, 1876.

"And truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."—1 John i. 3.

THE twelve apostles were favoured with the most intimate intercourse with our blessed Lord; but I can hardly say that they entered into fellowship with him during his life on earth. Each of them might have been asked the question that our Saviour put to one of them: "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?" But after Christ had ascended to heaven, and the Spirit of God had rested upon his disciples, and in proportion as the Spirit did rest upon them, all that they had seen, and heard, and handled of their Lord became a means of communion between himself and them. They were then able to realize what a very near, and dear, and deep, and familiar communion had been possible to them through having spent some three years or so with him in public and in private, and having actually seen him, and heard his voice, and felt the touch of his hand.

Now, since their literal hearing, seeing, and touching Christ did not create communion with him apart from the work of the Spirit, we need not so much regret, as we might otherwise have done, that we never saw, or heard, or touched the Saviour, because we also, without seeing, or hearing, or touching him, can believe in him, and rejoice that he said, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." And, further, as it is through faith, rather than by sight, or hearing, or feeling, that the Spirit of God operates upon us, when we believe the witness of the apostles concerning Christ, the Spirit of God will bless their message to us, and we shall enter into the apostles' fellowship. What the apostles learnt, they learnt in order that they might tell it to others. All that John saw, he was prepared to speak of according to his ability,

that others might have fellowship with him; and, dear friends, remember that, if you ever learn anything of Christ,—if you have any enjoyment of his presence at any time,—it is not for yourself alone, but for others also to share with you. When fellowship is the sweetest, your desire is the strongest that others may have fellowship with you; and when, truly, your fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ, you earnestly wish that the whole Christian brotherhood may share the blessing with you. My great desire, just now, is not so much to preach to you as to lead you, by the Holy Spirit's gracious assistance, into the actual enjoyment of that which the apostles possessed, that, believing, as we do, their testimony, we might thereby enter into their fellowship.

First, I am going to try to answer this question, *What is this fellowship with the Father and with his Son in general?* Secondly, I want to show you how we *can enjoy this fellowship in meeting, as we do, to celebrate the sacred supper in memory of our ascended Lord.*

I. First, then, WHAT IS THIS FELLOWSHIP WITH THE FATHER, AND WITH HIS SON, WHICH THE APOSTLES ENJOYED, AND WHICH THEY WISHED US TO SHARE WITH THEM?

Let me give you an illustration to show you what fellowship is. Yet, while I use it, I regret that it falls so far short of the truth I wish to illustrate, yet I know not of a better one. Suppose that a great plague raged in London, like that which carried off so many of the population in years gone by; and suppose that there lived, in this city, a father and a son, whose one care was for the healing of others. Suppose you lived in the same house as they lived in, and that you saw the intimate affection existing between them, and that you were in their council-chamber when they consulted together as to what was to be done for the perishing citizens. You marked the resolve of the son to make a sacrifice of himself, from day to day, by going into the homes of those who were smitten with the plague. You observed him as, with his father's smile resting upon him, he went forth to his work. You were privileged to live in the house while the work of rescue was going on, and you saw how the sick ones were being plucked from the grip of the terrible disease, like brands from the burning. You watched the father's love, and the son's self-sacrifice, and you were filled with admiration of them.

Now, that being taken as a supposition, feeble as it is, I want to ground upon that my description of what is meant by fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. You must not, however, confound fatherhood and sonship, as they exist among men, with these relationships as they stand towards God, for it is the eternal Father and the eternal Son with whom we are to be brought into fellowship and the terms that are used in speaking of them are accommodated to our poor understandings; but they are not to be literally construed; and, especially, they are not to be understood in any carnal sense, nor to be applied to the unregenerate.

Well, suppose we are living in such a house as I have tried to describe to you, the first thing necessary for fellowship with such a

father, and such a son, would be *mutual communication*. To live in the house where they were, yet never to speak to them, or to be spoken to by them, would be no sort of fellowship. Merely to know that there were such persons in the house, and to know that they were engaged in such blessed work as that, would not make us partakers with them, and would not give us communion with them. We must speak to them, and they must speak to us; and the speaking, on both sides, must be of a kind, loving sort;—not, on our part, that which would offend them; nor, on their part, that which would imply anger towards us. That is the very beginning of our fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. There must be mutual communication between us. We must have heard the voice of God in our hearts, and we must have spoken to God from our hearts. Thou canst not enjoy this fellowship, my friend, whatever thou sayest, unless thy soul has learnt to speak with God in prayer and praise, and unless thine ear has learnt to listen to whatever he saith unto thee through his Book, and by his Spirit, through his ministers, and in creation and providence. His voice is sounding everywhere; and, in order to fellowship with him, thou must have the ear that hears, and the heart that believes what he says unto thee; and thou must also have a tongue that responds to his voice, for there can be no true communion without mutual communication. Do you not perceive the kinship of the two words, *communion* and *communication*, communion and converse? This there must be, or there will be no true fellowship.

Now think of our illustration again, but transfer it to the higher sphere. You are living in the house, and you are yourself sick of the plague; yet, suffering in that fashion, in the house where the one business carried on is the healing of the sick, I will suppose that *you refuse to put yourself under the care of the Son, who is the great Physician*. If you despise his remedies, or delay receiving them, you cannot be said to have any true fellowship with him. Evidently, you do not appreciate his efforts on behalf of others, or you would be willing to accept his services on your own account. It is his business to save, yet you are not saved. He is quite close to you, and he is able, with a single touch of his hand, to heal you, yet you will not permit his sacred skill to be exercised upon you. Then, clearly, you do not believe in him, for you do not desire to submit yourself to him, and it is equally clear that you have no fellowship with him, and cannot have any. If we are to have any fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ, we must, first of all, surrender these poor sinful souls of ours into his dear hands, and we must go to the Father, and say to him, "Father, we have sinned;" and as we gaze, by faith, upon the atoning sacrifice, we must say, "But, although we must confess that we have sinned, there is the blood that makes atonement for sin; therefore, Father, accept us, because we put our trust in thine only-begotten Son." This is essential to true fellowship, and, as you will see, it is a part of it. So, here you are, first of all, in communication with the Father and the Son, and, secondly, reconciled to God by the death of his Son,—healed of the awful, soul-destroying plague of sin; and

thus you have taken two steps upon the great highway of fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ; and you can sing, with Toplady,—

> "For thy free electing favour,
> Thee, O Father, we adore!
> Jesus, our atoning Saviour,
> Thee we worship evermore!"

But it is needful, further, supposing us to be living in the house with this Father and Son, and desiring to have full fellowship with them, that we should have *an intelligent apprehension of the work they are doing.* Suppose we know, as a matter of general knowledge, that they are healing the sick, but we are not aware of the self-denials to which that well-beloved Son has exposed himself, or of the bountiful heart of that generous Father, who was willing even to yield up his Son to endure all the perils of the plague for the sake of those who were smitten by it. If we do not know as much as this, we cannot have anything like full fellowship with the Father and the Son; but, in proportion as we study the details of their working, and perceive the adaptation of what they are doing to the great end they have in view, we shall be sure to have fellowship with them. So, beloved, when you are yourselves saved, study to know more and more about both Christ and the Father. Dive deeply into the great mystery of the divine purposes of love and mercy. See how the Father ordained, before the foundation of the world, that, in the race of mankind, he would find exponents of his boundless love, who will make known to principalities and powers, in the heavenly places, throughout eternity, the manifold riches of his grace. See, too, how he laid upon his Son the work of healing this sin-smitten world. Study every detail that you can ascertain concerning the Father and the Son; the minutest touch upon the canvas is worthy of a century's study, so full is every point of deep mystery and rich instruction to the soul. And I am persuaded that, as you increase in the knowledge of the Father, and of his Son Jesus Christ, through the revelation of the Divine Spirit, you will also increase your fellowship with the Father and with his Son.

We advance still further *when this work, which is being done by those with whom we are in such close contact, commands our intense approbation and admiration.* Turning, for a minute, simply to our illustration, think of the heroic father and of his self-denying son, and say to yourself, "How wonderful it is that these plague-stricken people should be allowed to come, and howl and rage against him under his very window; yet, all the while, he is living for them;—how strange it is that these very people, who, in the madness that follows from their disease, even seek the life of his son, the great physician, nevertheless are the objects of that great physician's sedulous care, and he is ready to lay down his life for them if haply he may save them." You would thus find your heart going out in admiration of that father and son, and such undeserved and disinterested love as theirs would bring you into fellowship with

them. Now lift the illustration again into the higher sphere, and see, through it, the grand design of God to make his foes his friends, to change rebels into loyal courtiers, to make ingrates into sons and daughters, and to uplift the heirs of wrath, and cause them to sit with him as kings and priests upon his throne. When you see how Christ comes down to raise this world up from the gulf into which it had fallen, and, like another Atlas, only greater far, to bear upon his shoulders the weight of the world's sin, you cannot help admiring him, and as you admire and approve, you enter into a still higher measure of fellowship with the Father and with his Son.

You get to a stage yet further on when, at last, *you are able to enter into sympathy with the Divine Workers.* Suppose (to go back to our illustration,) you lived in the house with that father and son, and saw this work of mercy going on day after day,—poor starving and dying people being picked up, placed in the hospital, and healed, and that great physician, the son, perpetually suffering in order that he might heal them, enduring all manner of insults and ignominy at their hands, yet ever determining to save them,—you would come, at last, to feel such sympathy with both father and son that the plague-stricken people would be almost as much the object of your care as of theirs. You would be worked up into enthusiasm for the poor sufferers, and you would feel that it was such a blessed work to help in caring for them that, if it were possible, you would wish to be engaged in it. You begin to take an interest in all the details of the service, and you rejoice as you hear of one and another of the sick ones being restored. You feel that you must love the self-denying physician who is giving up comfort, ease, honour, everything, to save the suffering and dying people. You feel such sympathy with him in the work that he is doing that you could kiss his feet; and when you hear of his being despised and rejected, you feel that you could wash his feet with your tears of regret that he should be treated in so shameful a fashion. You are getting into fellowship with him now; and when I look at my dear Lord and Master, and think of the Father and the Son planning and working with heart and soul for the salvation of the chosen, and when I see sinners saved one by one, or even by hundreds delivered from sin, and made fit for heaven, my soul feels a deep sympathy with this glorious work. Do you not also feel it, dear friends? Do you not wish that sinners may be saved? Do you not pray that they may be? Does not your heart feel intense sympathy with the eternal purpose of the Father, and the gracious work of the Saviour? If so, you are having fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

I can suppose that, living in the house with that father and son, *you would want to go further still, and to share their work.* If you had been cured by the skill of the physician, you would feel yourself so intensely sympathetic with him in the great work that he is carrying on that, somewhat timidly and humbly, you would venture to say, "Can I be of any use? Can I carry the medicine, or put on the bandages, or give a cup of cold water to a fevered

lip, or wipe a tear from a weeping eye, or sit up at night with the sick who need to be watched and tended? Or, can I even clean the floor of the house, or unloose the latchets of the physician's shoes?"

> "My God, I feel the mournful scene;
> My bowels yearn o'er dying men;
> And fain my pity would reclaim,
> And snatch the firebrands from the flame."

And if, as will be sure to be the case when you are doing some thing for Christ, *some of the patients begin to mock at you, as they mocked at him*, that will reveal to you another phase of fellowship with him. Then you will understand why he was so patient, for you will need to ask him to make you patient; and when your words of warning, or instruction, or comfort are rejected, as his were, you will go to him, and say, "O Saviour, I understand now a little of what thy griefs were when thou wast despised and rejected of men, for they have rejected thy Word which thou didst put into my lips." In struggling to do good to others, you will meet with such rebuffs, misrepresentations, difficulties, and direct oppositions, that you will go to the Saviour, and say to him, "O my Lord, I can understand thee better now;—not that I am anything like what I ought to be, but even my failures help me to see more of thy sovereign patience and thy mighty love. O thou Divine Self-denier,—thou wondrous Self-sacrificer,—I should never have had such fellowship with thee as I now have if thou hadst not permitted me to take some humble part in this thy great and glorious work!"

So now, you see, you have reached a point a long way ahead of where we started. You are now enjoying fellowship with the Father, and with the Son, because you have become a co-worker with God. We put our puny hand to the great work which he has undertaken, and he strengthens our weak hand to do marvels for his name's sake. He worketh mightily within us, and so we are able to work for him, and to have fellowship with him.

To come to the climax of all, I will suppose that you are living in that house of mercy which has been my figure all along, and that you throw your whole soul so completely into the work that is carried on there that you say to the father and son, "This work so fully commands my sympathy, and so delights my heart, that I am quite carried away with enthusiasm for it. I admire the characters and I love the persons of those with whom I dwell; and now I ask that all I am, and all I have, may be used for the furtherance of this work, that I may not be reckoned merely as a lodger in this house, but be regarded as one of the family, and that, from henceforth, I, in my poor, humble capacity,—for I am less than nothing,—may never be personally mentioned again, but may be considered as part and parcel of this great mysterious firm, whose existence means nothing but good to the city, and whose influence is all being employed for the health of the inhabitants." You know what I mean,—lifting the illustration to the higher sphere,—and it is well if you can say to the Lord, at last, "My Lord, henceforth

for me to live shall be to do what thou willest, and to give myself wholly up to seek those objects for which Christ lived here below, and upon which the Father's heart has ever been set. Father, thou willest that the truth should be known wherever lies have at present the dominion; then give me grace, I pray thee, to will it too, and to publish thy truth everywhere according to the measure of my ability. Thou willest that the nations of the earth should be subdued unto thy Son, and become his loyal subjects; then, I pray thee to put me into the ranks of the legions by whom thou wilt achieve this glorious victory." Brethren and sisters in Christ, you will indeed have fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ, when you are nothing, and Christ is everything;—when you do not live to make money, or to attain to earthly honour, or to gain comfort, or anything else for yourselves; but when each of you can say, "This one thing will I do, for Christ will I live, and for Christ will I be content even to die, so that, to the utmost bounds of the earth his name and fame may be made known."

"I want to live as one who knows
Thy fellowship of love;
As one whose eyes can pierce beyond
The pearl-built gates above.

"As one who daily speaks to thee,
And hears thy voice divine
With depths of tenderness declare,
'Beloved, thou art mine!'"

II. Now, in the second place, I have briefly to answer the second question,—How may fellowship with the Father, and with the Son, be enjoyed in the celebration of the Lord's supper?

As you all know, the Lord's supper is the memorial feast in which we are to show, or proclaim, the Lord's death "till he come." Come he will, and our hearts cry to him, "Even so, come quickly, good Master!" This supper sets forth his death, and the way in which we derive benefit from it, namely, by receiving him spiritually into our souls even as we take the bread and wine literally into our bodies, and assimilate them so that they become part of ourselves. Well, then, how can we have fellowship with God in showing forth the death of Christ by means of this memorial supper?

I think we can do so, first, *by coming to the conclusion that the sacrifice of Christ was an absolute necessity.* We are fully persuaded that God the Father would never have given up his only-begotten Son to die for human guilt, if there had been any other way of saving lost sinners; and also that Jesus Christ would never have taken upon himself the awful burden of human guilt, and agreed to be bruised of the Father, if it had not been absolutely essential that he should die, or that man should, or that justice should; it must have been one of the three. God the Father agreed with God the Son that this colossal sacrifice was necessary; my soul, dost thou also agree that it was necessary? Dost thou see that there was no loophole for thine escape except through the bleeding Saviour's wounds? Wilt thou admit now, with all thine heart, that the

Father's wisdom was right, and that the Son's wisdom was right? Has the Spirit of God taught thee that this was the best plan of salvation that could possibly have been devised? Looking all around, hast thou come to the conclusion that there is no salvation by works, and no salvation by tears, and no salvation anywhere but by the blood of God's only-begotten and well-beloved Son? If any of you have come to that conclusion, you have thereby entered into fellowship with the Father, and with the Son, for they have long ago come to the same conclusion.

Then, next, dear friends, while you are sitting around the communion table, *endeavour so to think of the sufferings of Christ, that you will, in your measure, enter into the moods of his mind while he was suffering for you.* As he felt a great horror of sin, pray the Lord to make you feel intense horror of it, and let the very thought of it wound you as it wounded him. He felt the shame of sin; then ask the Holy Spirit to teach you how shameful it is. In your mind and heart, crown sin with a crown of thorns like that with which it crowned your Lord; and spit at sin, and scoff at sin, even as sin did scoff and spit at your Lord. Yet further, our Lord Jesus felt that justice must be honoured; so feel in your soul, as you come to the communion, that the justice of God must be honoured, and magnified, and glorified. Have fellowship with Christ in feeling that, cost what it may, God must never be unjust. Agree to that in your heart of hearts, and you will be having fellowship with the Father, and with the Son, while you are so agreeing. Go over, in your mind, all the griefs and woes that your dear Lord endured, and recollect how he resolved that, for the joy that was set before him, they were all things to be despised. Do you feel that any losses and crosses which you may have to bear for his sake, or any scorn or persecution that may ever come upon you because you belong to Christ, are things that are only to be reckoned as the small dust of the balance in comparison with the glory of God? Then, you are drinking of Christ's cup, and being baptized with his baptism, and having fellowship with him in his sufferings. Let your thoughts travel along the road to Gethsemane, and from Gethsemane to the accursed gibbet on the hill of Calvary; in your meditation, follow your Lord, and ask him to let you drink of the brook by the way, as he did, that you also may lift up your head; and in that way you will have fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. You may even adopt the rapturous language of Faber, and sing,—

> "I love to kiss each print where Christ
> Did set his pilgrim feet;
> Nor can I fear that blessèd path,
> Whose traces are so sweet."

Then, again, beloved, I pray the Holy Spirit *to help you, and to help me, to glorify God concerning the death of Christ while we are at his table.* As you eat the bread, and drink the wine, think of what Christ suffered, and of the mysterious way in which his sufferings have brought glory to the Father's name. I do verily

believe that, when Christ bore the sins of his people up to the tree, and away from the tree, the justice of God was more honoured than it would have been if all the elect had been sent to hell for ever. If our sins had been punished upon ourselves, with the utmost rigour of the divine law, that law would not have been so honoured, throughout the entire universe of intelligent beings, as it now must be when they hear that God himself would sooner pay the penalty of sin than allow his law to be broken with impunity. O august death of Christ, in which God himself becomes the sacrificial Victim, and bleeds and dies sooner than that, on the spotless tablets of his law, any stain should be made, even though it should be by the finger of his mercy! Glorify God, then, praise him, and let your whole souls extol him for this wondrous arrangement of grace,—

"So just to God, so safe for man,"—

for so you will be having fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. You probably remember that the line I just quoted was written by Dr. Watts in praise of the gospel, and I hope that you can say with him,—

"What if we trace the globe around,
And search from Britain to Japan,
There shall be no religion found
So just to God, so safe for man.

"How well thy blessèd truths agree!
How wise and holy thy commands!
Thy promises, how firm they be!
How firm our hope and comfort stands

"Should all the forms that men devise
Assault my faith with treacherous art,
I'd call them vanity and lies,
And bind the gospel to my heart."

Next, you can enter into fellowship, at the communion table, *by loving Christ, your Mediator, as well as by glorifying God the Father.* You know that God loves Jesus Christ; I mean, the Man Christ Jesus, God and Man in one Person. He loves him, not only in his essential Godhead, as he ever must love him, but he also loves him for his work's sake. With what delight do the Father's eyes ever rest on his Son! How sweetly does he say to him, "Well done!" How does he delight to honour and glorify him! Do not you also feel something of the same sort of love to Christ as you gather around his table? Ask the Spirit of God to cause you to be enamoured of Christ, and to make him to be "altogether lovely" in your eyes. Pray for such a view of him that your inmost heart shall melt under the divine passion of love to your dear Lord. Let his wounds be the charm to win you, let his spotless character be the beauty to enthral you; and when you thus love Christ, you will perceive that, as God the Father loves Christ even more than that,

you will have fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

We do not invite you to come and kneel around the communion table, for there is nothing upon it to be worshipped; but when the breaking of bread is being celebrated, we ask you to sit as much at your ease as you can, just as the last supper was instituted by our Lord. Those who gathered round that table reclined in the Oriental posture of repose. We cannot do that, nor would it be in harmony with our usual idea of what is reverent and seemly. At the paschal feast, they stood with their loins girded, and their staves in their hands, for they were about to depart in haste into the wilderness. You have no need to do that, but you may sit at this table as one who is at rest, and so you may have fellowship with God, for do you not know that this feast celebrates Christ's rest? His blood has been shed, his body broken, he has become food for our souls, his redemption work is finished. He has gone his way until he shall come, the second time, to drink the wine new in the kingdom of his Father. Christ rests; so, if you also rest, you will be in sympathy with his finished work.

Remember also that God rests. When Noah offered a sacrifice to God, Jehovah smelled a sweet savour of rest,—not in Noah's sacrifice, but in what Noah's sacrifice typified and symbolized; that is, in the sacrifice of Christ. If I may use such an expression concerning thee, O blessed God, thy Sabbath was broken by man's sin. It grieved God that he had made man, because he so rebelled against him, and dishonoured him; and, therefore, the Lord had no rest. But when he saw Christ on the cross,—a Man, who had done all his will, suffering all his will,—God, as well as man, bearing human sin in his own person,—it pleased the Lord to bruise him, and to put him to grief; but when he had done it, and the Son had finished his sacrifice, and come home, then the Father rested. He could rest in his love, and rejoice over his Church with singing, for the ransom price for her redemption was paid, the battle was fought, and the victory won for ever. Sin was overcome, the old serpent's head was broken, hell was vanquished, and death was doomed to die; and it is now only a matter of time when the gleaming banners of Christ, lit with the light of victory, shall be borne aloft after the final fight of Armageddon; and when that is over, there shall go up this mighty shout, which every star shall hear, while heaven's heights shall echo and re-echo the strain, and the deeps of hell are stirred with the wondrous chorus of the redeemed, "Hallelujah! Hallelujah! for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth,"—reigneth because of the cross,—reigneth because Christ was there able to say, "It is finished."

Come then, beloved, and rest, for so you will have fellowship with God himself. Let no sense of sin disturb you,—no distracting thoughts annoy you. Say to yourself, "God is satisfied with Christ's work, and so am I. God has said, 'It is enough;' and what is enough for the infinite God is surely enough for me." The Lord bless you, as you come to his table, for his Son's sake! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

1 JOHN I., AND II. 1—6.

May that Divine Spirit, who inspired every word of this wonderful letter, bless it to all our hearts as we read it!

Chapter i. Verse 1. *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life;*

You remember how John begins his Gospel: "In the beginning was the Word" and how, a little later, he says, "In him was life." The Holy Spirit seems to have recalled those expressions to his mind, for he moves him to use them again. Note how clearly, how explicitly, John writes concerning the Logos, the eternal Word. He says, "That which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the Word of life, ... that declare we unto you." The facts of Christ's history on earth are recorded by eye-witnesses who could not be deceived concerning them. They exercised their various senses with regard to Christ,—hearing, seeing, and touching him again and again. They were veracious witnesses, and they died in testimony of their faith in what they asserted. And when anything has been heard, seen, inspected, and even touched and handled, by a company of reliable witnesses, the testimony of such witnesses concerning it must be accepted as true.

2. *(For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;)*

John and his fellow-apostles were eye-witnesses of the coming to earth of God in human flesh,—the indwelling of the Word of life in a body like our own.

3, 4. *That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.*

Hear ye this, ye people of God! The object of the revelation of Jesus Christ is that you may have joy,—yea, that you may have a heart full of joy, and that you may know what full joy means; for, here below, we get but drops and dashes of joy, unless we are brought into fellowship with God through Jesus Christ; and, then, we have the very joy of God in our souls. Oh, the delight of it! Oh, that you could all know it to the full!

5. *This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.*

That is to say, God is knowledge; God is truth; God is purity. "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." There is no darkness of sin, or ignorance, or error about God.

6. *If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth;*

He who walks in ignorance and sin, is in fellowship with the powers of darkness; but he is certainly not in fellowship with God, who is light.

7. *But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.*

So that, in the very highest state to which we can attain in this world, namely, walking in the light, as God is in the light, and having fellowship with him, even then we shall sin, and shall still need the blood of Christ to cleanse us from its stain. So those err exceedingly who say that the Christian man can or does live utterly free from sin. Either they have

lowered the standard by which they judge the actions of men, or they excuse themselves on some Antinomian principle, or else they must be altogether ignorant of the truth about the matter; for "if we walk in the light, as God is in the light," and have fellowship with him, still "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin;" and, therefore, there is sin needing to be cleansed, for Christ does no work as a superfluity. But what a mercy it is for us to feel the continual cleansing of the precious blood of Jesus, so that, if we sin through ignorance, or if we sin by omission or by commission, that precious blood constantly keeps us so pure, that we can still walk with God!

8. *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.*

It does not matter either, in what sense we say it. We may try to beguile ourselves with the idea that we say it in some peculiar gospel sense; but "we deceive ourselves" if we say it in any sense whatsoever, for we have sin, and we do sin.

9. *If we confess our sins,—*

That is the point; and he, who says that he has no sins, will not confess them. He, who believes himself to be perfect, cannot enjoy the blessing described in this 9th verse. To deny that we have any sin, is to walk in darkness, and to show we are without the light which would reveal our sin to us; and if we are walking in darkness, we cannot be in fellowship with God. But to see sin in ourselves from day to day, humbly to confess it, and mourn over it, is to walk in the light; and walking in the light, we shall have fellowship with God who is light. "If we confess our sins,"—

9, 10. *He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.*

Chapter ii. Verse 1. *My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not.*

That you may abstain from it, and abhor it, and not indulge in anything that would lead you towards it.

1. *And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:*

We are to seek to live a perfectly holy life; but inasmuch as we constantly fall short of that ideal, here is our comfort; we still have an Advocate, we still have One who undertakes our cause, and pleads for us before his Father's throne.

2. *And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for our's only, but also for the sins of the whole world.*

Whoever comes to him shall receive deliverance from sin. Neither Jew nor Gentile is exclusively considered in the offering of the atonement of Christ; those for whom he died are of every race, and colour, and class, and kin.

3—6. *And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.*

May the Holy Spirit graciously lead us all to this extraordinary walk of grace, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—798, 807.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

HONOUR FOR HONOUR.

A Sermon

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DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

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"Them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed."—1 Samuel ii. 30.

GOD is certain, sooner or later, to recompense men according to the rule of infallible justice; and if it be so among saints, it is equally so among sinners. If we could really know the secret history of any man's life, we should be able to understand his career better than we now do. There is many a life, of which we have had to say to the Lord, "Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known;" yet, if we had known more about the man, it would have been all plain enough. If we had seen the sin that was hidden from human eyes, we should have understood the sorrow that was evident to all.

That will suffice with regard to the general principle that is enunciated in our text. If we honour God, he will honour us; and if we despise him, we shall be lightly esteemed ourselves. Now, taking only the first clause of the text, there are two things upon which I wish to speak with great earnestness. The first is, *here is a plain duty*, namely, to honour God; and, secondly, *here is a very gracious reward:* "them that honour me I will honour."

I. First, then, HERE IS A PLAIN DUTY; to honour God.

It is the natural duty of every creature to honour its Creator; and with such a glorious and blessed God as Jehovah is, it certainly must be incumbent upon all, who have any understanding of his existence, to render honour and homage unto him. Such is his personal grandeur, such is the perfection of his character, such is his almighty power, and such are the obligations under which we are placed to him as our Creator, that, altogether apart from spiritual things, it is, undoubtedly, the duty of every creature to honour God.

But what shall I say, beloved, of those of us who are the Lord's

chosen people? Do I need to prove that we should honour our God? He is our Father; and he said, long ago, "If then I be a Father, where is mine honour?" Ordinary children are bidden to honour their father and mother; then, how much more should the children of God honour their Father who is in heaven! He has done so much for us above and beyond our creation,—in our election, in our effectual calling, in our regeneration, in the blood-washing, in the daily supply of our needs, in the continual preservation of our souls from going down into the pit,—that we are overwhelmed with indebtedness to him; and the very least return that we can make to him is to render him all the honour that we can. He has made himself known to us in a way that he has not revealed himself to the rest of his creatures. His handiwork is seen in the whole visible creation; in every star his glory shines. But he is not seen there as he is revealed to us in Christ Jesus; and, alas! unrenewed men have not eyes with which they can see the resplendent glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ; but he has given to us this spiritual eyesight, he has taught us much about himself by his Spirit, and the Spirit has revealed to us even the deep things of God. If it were possible for us not to honour him, after all that we know of him, what criminality would be ours! But the knowledge and the grace he has given us constrain us to honour him; and the more we know of what he is, and of what he has done for us, the more do we feel that we must and will honour him. Glory be unto thy holy name, O gracious Father, that, in our inmost spirits, we do adore, and honour, and worship thee at this moment; and, by thy grace, we will do so till time shall be no more!

I hope you see clearly that it is your duty to honour God, so let us enquire in what way that duty comes home to each one of us. First, I think that we are to honour God *by confessing his Deity in all our prayers, and praises, and, indeed, at all times.* May none of us ever fall into the various heresies which some have held concerning the persons of the blessed Trinity in Unity! Of all errors, these most closely touch the very vitals of true religion. I suppose, if any man looks long into the doctrine of the Trinity, he will be like one who gazeth upon the sun, and will be apt, first, to be dazzled, and, then, to be blinded by the excessive light. If a man asketh that he may understand this great mystery, and refuseth to believe until he doth comprehend it, then he will be blinded, most assuredly. How canst thou, O man, hold the sea in the hollow of thy hand; and how canst thou see God's face and yet live? Dost thou marvel that thy mind staggers under the load that thou dost try to put upon it, and that thy reason begins to reel? We cannot comprehend God; but we can honour the Father by worshipping him, and honour the Son by adoring him, and honour the Holy Spirit by paying homage, and reverence, and glory unto him, and never countenancing, in our spirit, any error which would detract from the glory of Father, Son, or Holy Spirit; for, if we do, we shall not obtain the blessing promised in our text: "Them that honour me I will honour." God save us from believing any doctrines which cast reflections upon our Lord Jesus Christ, or upon the

Divine Spirit! I am afraid that the Church of Christ has never yet sufficiently honoured the Spirit of God, and that, in the ministry of the present day, there is such a general ignoring of the Holy Spirit and his work that many hearers might say, as those disciples at Ephesus did, "We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost." If that is the case, it ought to be repented of, and avoided in the future; for you may depend upon it that honouring the Triune God is absolutely essential to obtaining the blessing promised in our text, "Them that honour me I will honour."

Secondly, we can do this *by confessing the dominion of God*, and proving the reality of our confession by yielding obedience to him. It is no use for you to say, "I honour God," and yet to continue to live contrary to his law. If we do honour him, we shall seek to obey his commandments; and though, by reason of infirmity, we shall fall short of the perfection of obedience, we shall honour the Lord by weeping over our imperfections. We shall not quarrel with the requirements of God's commands, but we shall ask the Holy Spirit to help us to be conformed to them. That man does not honour God who goes picking and choosing among the divine precepts, attending to one, but not to another. He is not honouring God who does not render obedience to his will in all things,—the social duties that appertain to the hearth and home, the duties that are associated with the Church of God, and the duties which concern the common life of ourselves and others. It is never right to offer to God a sacrifice stained with the blood of a duty; and it is by endeavouring to be obedient to the Lord in all respects that our desire to honour him is to be proved. If there is anything about the Lord's will that you do not like, my dear brother, that is a point in which you are wrong. It is an indication of the true state of your soul when there is any divine precept against which you kick, and you should pray very fervently that you may overcome that sin, and be conformed to the Lord's will in all things; for, unless you honour him by seeking to render universal obedience to him,—unless, being saved by his grace, you abhor all sin, and seek, by the help of the Holy Spirit, to walk in all the commandments of the Lord blameless, you have not given to him the honour which he rightly claims, and you cannot expect that he should honour you.

In the next place, seeing that we have all sinned, we must honour God *by confessing sin, and so glorifying his justice.* I believe that God is greatly glorified by a man, who is overwhelmed with a sense of his guilt, when he comes, and bares his bosom to the divine inspection, acknowledging all his offences, grieving over them, and, as it were, laying his head upon the block, and saying, "Lord, if thou dost execute me, if thou dost let the axe of thy justice fall upon me to my utter destruction, I dare not complain, for I deserve it all." Therefore, dear friends, submit yourselves to the sentence of God, acknowledge how just it would be if he were to execute it upon you, for so you shall find favour at his hands. I do not know what else a poor convinced sinner can do, that can be more acceptable to God, with the one exception of his coming to believe

fully in Christ. So, guilty one, glorify God by making confession of thy guilt. Thou hast broken his holy law; own thine offence in having broken it. Pay respect to the commands of God by confessing that thou oughtest to have kept them. Admit the heinousness of the sin by which thou hast violated the will of God; for, in so doing, thou wilt be honouring the Lord.

And you, dear child of God, conscious of so many imperfections, recollect that you honour God when you lie very low before him,—when you loathe yourself,—when, as in the very dust, you cry, "The Lord remember his poor unworthy child, and have pity upon me!" You are thus magnifying and glorifying the holiness of God to which you feel that you have not yet attained. If you own that you are but dust and ashes in his sight, and not worthy to be regarded with favour by him, that humility of yours is honouring and glorifying to him.

Further, we can honour the Lord *by submitting to his teaching.* A great many people go to the Bible to find texts in it to endorse a system of divinity which they have already embraced. That is not honouring God. The right course is to get your system of divinity out of the Bible under the unerring teaching of the Holy Spirit. This is the Book that is to teach us; we are not to try to square it to our scheme, but we are to make our scheme—if we have one,—embrace all that is here revealed so far as we can ascertain it. Young man, I can speak from experience when I say that nothing will give you greater peace of mind than taking the Word of God as your only guide from the very beginning of your Christian life. It is commonly said that "the Bible, and the Bible alone, is the religion of Protestants;" but I scarcely know of any sect of Protestants, with one exception, of which that is true. There is something that all the others believe which cannot be found in the Bible, and they have some other book or tradition tacked on at the end of the Bible. Sit down, my friend, and study the Book without note or comment, asking the Holy Spirit to teach thee what it means; and whatever it means, do thou believe it. Thou wilt not discover all that it means; there will be mistakes in thee, as in thy fellow-Christians; but do thou follow the truth, as far as thou canst see it, wherever it may lead thee, even if following it shall cause thee to stand quite alone; for, in so doing, thou wilt be honouring it, and it will honour thee. It is such a sweet thing to be able to say, "I may have been mistaken, but I have honestly sought to know the mind of God, and with earnest dependence upon the Holy Spirit I have desired to accept his teaching; and, as far as I have learnt it, I have followed it, regardless of the consequences of doing so, knowing that it must always be safe to follow where the Spirit leads the way." Act thus, young men and young women, whatever others may do. Some of them are content to follow the erroneous customs of former generations, although they are clearly contrary to the Word of God. Do not you follow their evil example; but while the wax is soft, let it take the divine impress of truth, and so may you grow up to honour God beyond all who have gone before you!

There is another way of honouring God, and that is, *by simply*

trusting him at all times. Be it ever remembered that, the greater our troubles, the greater our weakness, the greater our infirmities, the greater is our opportunity of glorifying God by the aid of his Holy Spirit. "They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; these see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep." They see much that landsmen never see; and those who have deep experience of trial and trouble are the people who see most of the wonders of the Lord in the spiritual realm. Dear brother, all seemed to go well with you until you trusted God; but since you did so, everything has seemed to go wrong with you. Can you trust him now? Faith, when we are in smooth water, honours God; but faith, when we are in rough waters, will glorify him far more. It is easy to bless his name when the barn is full, and the table loaded; but can you glorify him now that the homestead is burnt down, and the cupboard is bare? Ah, good woman, you could glorify God when your husband was in vigorous health, and your children were all round about you; but now that he has been taken from you, and your children are following him, consumption seizing upon them one after the other, can you trust the Lord now? And you, my brother, now that your leg is broken, or your lungs begin to fail, or the asthma comes upon you, or old age is coming to cripple you,—now that your circumstances are changing, and that your friends, like the swallows in autumn, begin to forsake you, can you rejoice in the Lord, and glory in the God of your salvation now? If you can do so, it is now in your power to honour God in a very wondrous way. It is glorious to be able to say, with Job, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." Whatever happens to you, never doubt the wisdom of God's working, or the love of his heart, but still "rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him." If you do this, you will honour him, and he will in due time honour you.

I might remind you of many other ways in which we may honour and glorify God, but I will only mention one more; and that is this, *when we have not any particular trouble, we ought to honour God by great joy.* I do not mean by such joy as the worldling has in his corn and wine, but by holy joy. How few Christians speak of God as their exceeding joy! I think we do meet with cheerful Christians, nowadays, more frequently than we used to do, for we were, at one time, taught that, the longer a man's face, the greater was his grace. We do not believe in any such notion as that; yet, to my mind, we seldom, if ever, attain to the standard of joy which ought to be the abiding portion of a child of God. The elect ought to be the happiest people beneath the sky. Look at a great furnace when there is a strong blast blowing upon it; what intense heat there is there! A Christian ought to be like that furnace, glowing with intense delight, fervent love, and overflowing joy. Why should you not rejoice, beloved? Your sins are forgiven you; you are an heir of heaven; you are, it may be, within a month or two, or within a year or two, of being at God's right hand, to go no more out for ever; why should you not rejoice? Even now, his Spirit dwelleth within you, his heart burneth with love towards

you, and he rejoiceth over you; why should you not rejoice? If you did rejoice more, you would honour the Lord more, and he would honour you even as he has promised. The poorest saint here can share in this great blessing simply by honouring God. The man with the least talent can honour God. The most ignorant Christian, the one who is least instructed in worldly learning, can honour God. The weakest in bodily health, the sick, the dying can all honour God, if they are his people; this plain duty is one which is possible to all the saints, by the Holy Spirit's gracious aid. May he help each one of us to carry it out, and truly to honour God!

II. Now I turn to the second point,—HERE IS A VERY GRACIOUS REWARD: "Them that honour me I will honour."

First, *this is true in the Church of God.* The sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were priests; but they did not honour God, and therefore God did not honour them. The people despised them, and loathed the very services of the sanctuary, because of their sin, and God thrust them out of the priest's office. I believe, my brethren,—and there are many of us who either are already ministers of the gospel, or are in course of training for that high office,—I believe that, unless we, with all our hearts, honour God in our ministry, he will never honour us. My dear brother, if you ever go in for anything else but glorifying God, you will make a failure of it. If you start with the idea of being a fine preacher, one who is able to orate in rounded periods and flowery sentences, or if it is your great ambition to gain a good position among respectable people, you will certainly come down with a crash, and great will be your fall. But if any young man, truly called of God, says to himself, "I will glorify God, whether I live or die,—whether I am poor or whether I am prosperous;—whether I am the means of bringing many souls to Christ, or am, apparently, a failure in my ministry, I will, at least, preach the truth; and I will pray over it, and I will agonize in prayer for the souls of men. My teaching shall not aim at glorifying philosophical opinions, or displaying my own culture and my own powers of thought; but I will, above everything else, honour God; I will honour the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; I will preach nothing up but Christ, and nothing down but sin. I shall not seek to honour the denomination to which I belong, but I will live and labour simply to honour God;"—well, my brother, if that is your resolve, then the Lord will honour you.

Then, next, *this promise is true with regard to our own households.* Poor Eli, I have no doubt, wished to have honour in his own house, so he paid great deference to his wicked sons. He knew that they were doing very, very wrong; but he spoke very gently to them, just as some Christian people, whom I know, are doing in their own families. Their boys are living as badly as ever they can, but they only say, "Our sons are so high-spirited and so easily offended that we must only indirectly hint that they are doing wrong. It would never do for us to pull them up sharply, and say to them right straight out, 'You are going headlong to hell, and we implore you to stop; for, if you continue to act as you are now doing, you will be ruined for ever.'" Ay, and in many a house God is not honoured

by family prayer, and the boys and girls are taught to look after money as if that were the chief end of life. "You go in for business, John, and make money somehow, and do not be too particular about the means you employ in getting it. And, Mary, that is a very nice young man, an excellent Christian man, too, who is coming to see you; but he will not do for a husband, he has not enough money, and that is the main thing to be considered nowadays." The worship of Mammon, the golden calf, prevails almost everywhere. God commanded his ancient people not to offer their children to Moloch, but it is done very often now; many parents are offering their sons and daughters to Moloch,—the Moloch of fashion, the Moloch of wealth; daughters are given to men without characters so long as they have a sufficient quantity of gold.

Well now, if the father or mother, instead of falling into that sin, says, "My chief concern for my dear boys and girls is that they should know the Lord. I should be glad to see them succeeding in business, or happily married to those who are in a good position; but my great longing is that they may know Christ, and be found in him, for that is the main thing after all; and I will not tolerate in my house anything that Christ would not look upon with approbation, neither will I permit, so far as my power can go, anything that would grieve the Spirit of God," I believe that wherever parents thus seek the honour of God, God will honour their families very wonderfully. You will find, almost everywhere, that when a man gives everything up for God, and does not look so much for the advancement of his own family as for the good of God's family as a whole, the Lord says to him very much what Queen Elizabeth said to one of the London merchants of her day. "I want you to go to Hamburg, to attend to some business of mine," said the queen. "But, your majesty," said the merchant, "my own business will suffer in my absence." "No," said the queen, "it will not; for, if you attend to my business, I will attend to yours." And the Lord says to us that, if we honour him, he will honour us; and even in this present life he will give us a hundred fold for anything we give up for him, and in the world to come life everlasting.

May none of you, dear friends, ever be like Eli, who had to mourn over the destruction of his sinful sons; but may you honour God in your families, for then he will also honour you there. Who is so honoured as the venerable Christian man who has his sons and his grandsons around him? He is a king, every inch of him, though, perhaps, he never earned more than a day-labourer's wages. As he lays his hands upon the heads of his children's children, and implores his God to be their God also, I seem to see a patriarch stand before me in a grandeur which an emperor might envy. God will honour you in your family if you honour him there.

Then, again, God has a way of honouring his people *in the society around them.* You, young man, going into that warehouse, and taking a clerkship with many others, if you are consistent, true to

your colours, and serve God faithfully, they will ridicule you, very likely, for a while; but if you continue to be consistent, they will soon respect you. If you honour God, God will honour you; and you will find that, in society, it is the wise and safe method to keep the Lord always before you. Some of you, young men, who have come up to London from the country, are apt to think that, as others do not go to a place of worship on the Sabbath, you will not do as you did at your home; but I pray you to keep up your good country custom, for your employers, and those who are about you, will think far better of you if you do so; and, although this is, by itself, a low and ignoble motive, yet it has its place among the higher reasons for attending the means of grace. If you honour God, you will get honour in the eyes of those whose opinion is worthy of your regard.

Again, if we honour God, he will honour us *in the wide, wide world*, so far as our influence may reach. Look at that great crowd gathered in Smithfield. Who is that poor wretch standing in the middle? Many of those around him look upon him with the utmost scorn and derision. They have chained him up to a stake, and they are bringing dry faggots, for they are going to burn him to death. Who is that man? People in the crowd cry out that he is a dreadful heretic, who deserves to die; but if you turn to Foxe's Book of Martyrs, you will find his name recorded there amongst the noble army who died as heroes of the cross. Because he suffered for Christ, God has honoured him; and, at this present day, who among us would not rather be the martyr who was burned than the cardinal who was the means of getting him burned? Who would not rather have been numbered amongst the faithful multitudes, in the valleys of Piedmont, whose names are all unknown, than have been the Duke of Savoy, or the King of France, or the Pope of Rome, who conspired together to put them to death?

And, dear friends, if God did not honour us before men at all, it would not matter much; for *those who honour him he honours in their own consciences.* God can honour you, even though nobody else sees that he does it, in such a way that you will be more contented with that honour than if your name and fame were blazoned forth before the whole world. The orator, who addressed an audience, and found that all his hearers went away with the exception of one man, was quite content with his one auditor, for that man was Plato; and if, in this world, you should so act that you should have no approbation left except the approval of God manifested to your own conscience, you might well be content. "I, Athanasius, against the world," was a grand thing for that staunch hero of the faith to be able to say; but if God was with Athanasius, he might just as well have said, "I, Athanasius, against fifty thousand worlds," for what is the whole universe in comparison with God? "If God be for us, who can be against us?" Honour God, my dear young friend; leaving the parental roof, and coming to London, I pray you to honour God; and even if you should not meet with the esteem which a good character ought to win for you from those by whom you are surrounded,—if you should come

under a cloud,—if you should, after all, have to live a life of poverty and obscurity,—yet the fact that you have done what is right, and that God smiles upon you with approval, and gives you peace of conscience, and quiet confidence in your soul, will be a sufficient reward for you.

I close by reminding you that *we never know, any of us, how much God is honouring us.* You did a noble deed, the other day, my brother, yet no one said, "Thank you" for it. You gave all you had, poor widow,—the two mites that were all your living, and nobody knew anything about it; but do you suppose that there is no fame except that which is spoken of by the breath of man? There are blessed spirits hovering all around us; multitudes of holy angels are watching the saints, and they see and approve all that is right; and I doubt not that, often, there is a worthy eulogium uttered by angelic lips when they see the devotion of the saints of God,—the devotion which is unseen by mortal eyes.

And, last of all, there shall come a day when this earth shall be all ablaze; and, amidst the terrors of that great consummation of the age, the dead shall rise, and you shall be amongst them, brother. Then shall the trumpet sound exceeding loud and long, and all human beings, and the fallen spirits, too, shall come to judgment; and there, amidst such a throng as never was beheld before, the despised, misrepresented, persecuted follower of the right, who honoured God at all costs, shall receive, before the assembled universe, honour from the Lord of all. Lift up your heads, O ye children of God, for your redemption draweth nigh! It is a grand day, with some men, when they receive the Victoria Cross from their sovereign's hand, or when they are elevated to the House of Lords; but it will be a far higher honour when Christ shall say to the righteous, "Come, ye blessed of my Father; inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world," and when he shall say to each one who has faithfully served him, "Well done, good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful in a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Brothers and sisters, if God has saved us, let us live as in the light of the coming day of judgment; and may the Lord have mercy upon us in that day, and honour us because first, by his grace, he enabled us to honour him!

As for you who never think of honouring God, and never care about him, your destruction is certain if you continue in the way in which you are now walking. If you want to know how you may be damned, it is only a little matter of neglect that will ensure it. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" I fear that many of you are living in that neglect. May the Holy Spirit graciously turn you from it, and cause you to seek the Lord, and believe in Jesus, this very moment, that you, too, honouring God by your confession of sin, and by believing in his Son, Jesus Christ, whom he hath set forth as the one propitiation for sin, may find the promise of our text true to you also, for he will honour you even as you have honoured him.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

1 SAMUEL II.

Verses 1—3. *And Hannah prayed and said, My heart rejoiceth in the* LORD, *mine horn is exalted in the* LORD: *my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies; because I rejoice in thy salvation. There is none holy as the* LORD: *for there is none beside thee: neither is there any rock like our God. Talk no more so exceeding proudly; let not arrogancy come out of your mouth: for the* LORD *is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed.*

This is a very suggestive and forcible expression. God does not judge our actions by their appearance, but puts them into the scales of the sanctuary, and weighs them as carefully as bankers weigh gold.

4—8. *The bows of the mighty men are broken, and they that stumbled are girded with strength. They that were full have hired out themselves for bread; and they that were hungry ceased: so that the barren hath born seven; and she that hath many children is waxed feeble. The* LORD *killeth, and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up. The* LORD *maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up. He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the* LORD'S, *and he hath set the world upon them.*

What a clear view Hannah had of the sovereignty of God, and how plainly she perceived that God overrules all mortal things, and doeth as he wills! How she seemed to glory in the power of that almighty hand whose working unbelievers cannot discern, but which, to this gracious woman's opened eye, was so conspicuous everywhere!

9—12. *He will keep the feet of his saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness; for by strength shall no man prevail. The adversaries of the* LORD *shall be broken to pieces; out of heaven shall he thunder upon them: the* LORD *shall judge the ends of the earth; and he shall give strength unto his king, and exalt the horn of his anointed. And Elkanah went to Ramah to his house. And the child did minister unto the* LORD *before Eli the priest. Now the sons of Eli were sons of Belial; they knew not the* LORD.

Yet they were priests; and when a man stands up to minister in holy things, and by virtue of his office is supposed to know the Lord, yet really does not, he stands, not only in a position of the utmost guilt, but also in a position in which he is never likely to get a blessing. He seems to be beyond the reach of the ordinary agencies of mercy, because he has assumed a position to which he has no right.

13, 14. *And the priest's custom with the people was, that when any man offered sacrifice, the priest's servant came, while the flesh was in seething, with a fleshhook of three teeth in his hand; and he struck it into the pan, or kettle, or caldron, or pot; all that the fleshhook brought up the priest took for himself. So they did in Shiloh unto all the Israelites that came thither.*

There was no such rule or regulation given by God; but these sons of Eli had made rules for themselves. It is always wrong to alter the regulations of the Lord's house. Even the least of them should be obeyed exactly as it stands.

15, 16. *Also before they burnt the fat, the priest's servant came, and said to the man that sacrificed, Give flesh to roast for the priest; for he will not have sodden flesh of thee, but raw. And if any man said unto him, Let them not fail to burn the fat presently, and then take as much as thy soul desireth; then he would answer him, Nay; but thou shalt give it me now: and if not, I will take it by force.*

There were sacrifices in which God had his portion in the burning of the

fat upon the altar, and the priest had a portion allotted to him ; and the offerer himself had a portion upon which he fed, in token of his communion and fellowship with God. The priest ought to have been content with what was an ample portion for him ; but the greed of these young men prostituted holy things, and defiled the house of the Lord.

17. *Wherefore the sin of the young men was very great before the* LORD: *for men abhorred the offering of the* LORD.

They not only grieved God, but they also grieved his people so much that they ceased to come where their consciences were wounded, and where their tenderest sensibilities were perpetually shocked.

18. *But Samuel ministered before the* LORD, *being a child, girded with a linen ephod.*

What a contrast there was between little Samuel and the sons of Eli ! He was not led astray by the evil example of those who were older than himself, and to whom he would naturally look up because of their high office. This dear child escaped contamination because God's grace preserved him, and also because his mother's prayers, like a wall of fire, were round about him.

19—21. *Moreover his mother made him a little coat, and brought it to him from year to year, when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice. And Eli blessed Elkanah and his wife, and said, The* LORD *give thee seed of this woman for the loan which is lent to the* LORD. *And they went unto their own home. And the* LORD *visited Hannah, so that she conceived and bare three sons and two daughters. And the child Samuel grew before the* LORD.

She lent one child to the Lord, and she had five others given to her. God always pays good interest on all his loans. " He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord." It would be well if more would see how much per cent. they could get from such a loan as that.

22—25. *Now Eli was very old, and heard all his sons did unto all Israel; and how they lay with the women that assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And he said unto them, Why do ye such things ? for I hear of your evil doings by all this people, Nay my sons; for it is no good report that I hear : ye make the* LORD'S *people to transgress. If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him : but if a man sin against the* LORD, *who shall intreat for him ?*

That is the way Eli rebuked his sons. " And very gently he did it, dear old man," says someone. Yes, but don't you imitate him ; for, if you do, you may also inherit the curse that came upon his house. There are other virtues in this world besides gentleness. There is sometimes needed the power to speak sternly,—to rebuke with firmness and severity ; and Eli had not this. He was an easy-going old soul. Ah ! but when the honour of God is at stake, such action as his is out of place. It is all very well to have everybody saying, " Mr. So-and-so is such an amiable man ; there is no sectarianism and no bigotry about him ; he never says a word to offend anybody." Just so ; but Martin Luther was not at all that kind of man, and where should we have been without such protests as his ?

25. *Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto the voice of their father, because the* LORD *would slay them.*

They had gone so far in their sin that the Lord permitted them to go further still, and to bring punishment upon themselves for their evil deeds.

26. *And the child Samuel grew on, and was in favour both with the* LORD, *and also with men.*

How vividly the Holy Spirit brings out the contrast between Samuel and

these two wicked young men! They grew on in sin, but the child Samuel grew on in favour both with God and with men. The Lord loves to watch his lilies growing among the sharp thorns, and to see how brightly his stars are shining in the blackest night.

27, 28. *And there came a man of God unto Eli, and said unto him, Thus saith the* LORD, *Did I plainly appear unto the house of thy father, when they were in Egypt in Pharaoh's house? And did I choose him—*

That is, Aaron,—

28—30. *Out of all the tribes of Israel to be my priest, to offer upon mine altar, to burn incense, to wear an ephod before me? and did I give unto the house of thy father all the offerings made by fire of the children of Israel? Wherefore kick ye at my sacrifice and at mine offering, which I have commanded in my habitation; and honourest thy sons above me, to make yourselves fat with the chiefest of all the offerings of Israel my people? Wherefore the* LORD *God of Israel saith, I said indeed that thy house, and the house of thy father, should walk before me for ever:*

There was a condition attached to that promise,—a condition implied, if not expressly stated.

30, 31. *But now the* LORD *saith, Be it far from me; for them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed. Behold, the days come, that I will cut off thine arm,—*

That is, "the strength of thy family shall be taken away,"—

31—33. *And the arm of thy father's house, that there shall not be an old man in thine house. And thou shalt see an enemy in my habitation, in all the wealth which God shall give Israel: and there shall not be an old man in thine house for ever. And the man of thine, whom I shall not cut off from mine altar, shall be to consume thine eyes, and to grieve thine heart: and all the increase of thine house shall die in the flower of their age.*

God does not think little of sin in his ministers, and in his sanctuary. There is a difference between sin and sin. The place where it is committed may make a difference, and the office of the man who commits it may make a difference. Sin makes its culmination when the sinner is highly favoured, and brought into close relationship with God by office.

34, 35. *And this shall be sign unto thee, that shall come upon thy two sons, on Hophni and Phinehas; in one day they shall die both of them. And I will raise me up a faithful priest, that shall do according to that which is in mine heart and in my mind: and I will build him a sure house; and he shall walk before mine anointed for ever.*

No doubt first referring to Zadok, who succeeded afterwards to the priest's office; but looking further forward still to our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the ever-faithful High Priest who always does according to that which is in the mind and heart of the Father.

36. *And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left in thine house shall come and crouch to him for a piece of silver and a morsel of bread, and shall say, Put me, I pray thee, into one of the priests' offices, that I may eat a piece of bread.*

Or, rather, as the margin has it, "Put me, I pray thee, into somewhat about the priesthood." "Put me into something that has to do with the priesthood." So the house of Eli passed from its honourable elevation into degradation and poverty. However highly favoured any of us may have been, let us never presume upon that, and turn aside to sin. If we do not know the Lord, and do not honour him in all the acts that we perform in his name, it may be that a like degradation to that of Eli's house may come upon us because we have despised the will and the words of the Most High.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE HOLY SPIRIT GLORIFYING CHRIST.

A Sermon

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C. H. SPURGEON,

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"He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you."—John xvi. 14.

THE needs of spiritual men are very great, but they cannot be greater than the power of the Divine Trinity is able to meet. We have one God,—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,—One in Three, and Three in One; and that blessed Trinity in Unity gives himself to sinners that they may be saved. In the first place, every good thing that a sinner wants is in the Father. The prodigal son was wise when he said, "I will arise and go to my father." Every good and perfect gift comes from God the Father, the first Person in the blessed Trinity, because every good gift and every perfect gift can only be found in him. But the needy soul says, "How shall I get to the Father? He is infinitely above me. How shall I reach up to him?" In order that you might obtain the blessings of grace, God was in Christ Jesus, the second ever-blessed Person of the Sacred Trinity. Let me read you part of the verse that follows my text: "All things that the Father hath are mine." So, you see, everything is in the Father first; and the Father puts all things into Christ. "It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell." Now you can get to Christ because he is man as well as God. He is "over all, God blessed for ever;" but he came into this world, was born of the Virgin Mary, lived a life of poverty, "suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried." He is the conduit-pipe, conveying to us all blessings from the Father. In the Gospel of John we read, "Of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace." Thus you see the Father, with every good thing in himself, putting all fulness into the Mediator, the Man Christ Jesus who is also the Son of God.

Now I hear a poor soul say, "But I cannot even get to Christ; I am blind and lame. If I could get to him, he would open my eyes; but I am so lame that I cannot run or even walk to him. If I could

get to him, he would give me strength; but I lie as one dead. I cannot see Christ, or tell where to find him." Here comes in the work of the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the blessed Unity. It is his office to take of the things of Christ, and show them unto saints and sinners, too. We cannot see them, but we shall see them fast enough when he shows them to us. Our sin puts a veil between us and Christ. The Holy Spirit comes and takes the veil away from our heart, and then we see Christ. It is the Holy Spirit's office to come between us and Christ, to lead us to Christ, even as the Son of God comes between us and the Father, to lead us to the Father; so that we have the whole Trinity uniting to save a sinner, the Triune God bowing down out of heaven for the salvation of rebellious men. Every time we dismiss you from this house of prayer, we pronounce upon you the blessing of the Sacred Trinity: "May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you!" And you want all that to make a sinner into a saint, and to keep a saint from going back to be a sinner again. The whole blessed Godhead, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, must work upon every soul that is to be saved.

See how divinely they work together,—how the Father glorifies the Son, how the Holy Spirit glorifies Jesus, how both the Holy Spirit and the Lord Jesus glorify the Father! These Three are One, sweetly uniting in the salvation of the chosen seed.

To-night our work is to speak of the Holy Spirit. Oh, what a blessed Person he is; not merely a sacred influence, but a Divine Person, "very God of very God." He is the Spirit of holiness to be reverenced, to be spoken of with delight, yet with trembling; for, remember, there is a sin against the Holy Ghost. A word spoken against the Son of man may be forgiven, but blasphemy against the Holy Ghost (whatever that may be, I know not,) is put down as a sin beyond the line of divine forgiveness. Therefore reverence, honour, and worship God the Holy Spirit, in whom lies the only hope that any of us can ever have of seeing Jesus, and so of seeing God the Father.

First, to-night, I shall try to speak of *what the Holy Spirit does:* "He shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you;" secondly, I shall seek to set forth *what the Holy Spirit aims at:* "He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you;" and, thirdly, I shall explain how *in both these things he acts as the Comforter*, for we read, in the seventh verse, that our Saviour says, "If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you;" and it is of the Comforter that he says, "He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you."

I. First, we are to consider WHAT THE HOLY SPIRIT DOES. Jesus says, "He shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you."

The Holy Ghost, then, *deals with the things of Christ.* How I wish that all Christ's ministers would imitate the Holy Spirit in this respect! When you are dealing with the things of Christ, you are on Holy Ghost ground; you are following the track of the Holy Spirit. Does the Holy Ghost deal with science? What is science? Another name for the ignorance of men. Does the Holy Ghost deal

with politics? What are politics? Another name for every man getting as much as he can out of the nation. Does the Holy Ghost deal with these things? Nay, my brethren, "He shall receive of mine." O my brother, the Holy Ghost will leave you if you go gadding about after these insignificant trifles! He will leave you, if you aim at magnifying yourself, and your wisdom, and your plans; for the Holy Spirit is taken up with the things of Christ. "He shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you." I like what Mr. Wesley said to his preachers. "Leave other things alone," said he; "you are called to win souls." So I believe it is with all true preachers. We may let other things alone. The Holy Ghost, who is our Teacher, will own and bless us if we keep to his line of things. O preacher of the gospel, what canst thou receive like the things of Christ? And what canst thou talk of so precious to the souls of men as the things of Christ? Therefore, follow thou the Holy Ghost in dealing with the things of Christ.

Next, the Holy Spirit *deals with feeble men.* "He shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you." "Unto you." He is not above dealing with simple minds. He comes to those who have no training, no education, and he takes the things of Christ, and shows them to such minds. The greatest mind of man that was ever created was a poor puny thing compared with the infinite mind of God. We may boast about the great capacity of the human intellect; but what a narrow and contracted thing it is at its utmost width! So, for the Holy Spirit to come and teach the little mind of man, is a great condescension. But we see the great condescension of the Holy Ghost even more when we read, "Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called;" and when we hear the Saviour say, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." The Holy Ghost takes of the things of Christ, and shows them to those who are babes compared with the wise men of this world. The Lord Jesus might have selected princes to be his apostles; he might have gathered together twelve of the greatest kings of the earth, or at least twelve senators from Rome; but he did not so. He took fishermen, and men belonging to that class, to be the pioneers of his kingdom; and God the Holy Ghost takes of the things of Christ, high and sublime as they are, and shows them unto men like these apostles were, men ready to follow where the Lord led them, and to learn what the Lord taught them.

If you think of the condescension of the Holy Spirit in taking of the things of Christ, and showing them unto us, you will not talk any more about coming down to the level of children when you talk to them. I remember a young man who was a great fool, but did not know it, and therefore was all the greater fool; once, speaking to children, he said, "My dear children, it takes a great deal to bring a great mind down to your capacities." You cannot show me a word of Christ of that kind. Where does the Holy Ghost ever talk about its being a great come-down for him to teach children, or to teach us? Nay, nay; but he glorifies Christ by taking of his things, and showing them unto us, even such poor ignorant scholars as we are.

If I understand what is meant here, I think that it means, first, that the Holy Ghost *helps us to understand the words of Christ.* If we will study the teaching of the Saviour, it must be with the Holy Spirit as the light to guide us; he will show us what Christ meant by the words he uttered. We shall not lose ourselves in the Saviour's verbiage; but we shall get at the inner meaning of Christ's mind, and be instructed therein; for the Lord Jesus says, "He shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you." A sermon of Christ, even a single word of Christ, set in the light of the Holy Spirit, shines like a diamond; nay, like a fixed star, with light that is never dim. Happy men and happy women who read the words of Christ in the light shed upon them by the Holy Ghost! But I do not think that this is all that the text means.

It means this: "Not only shall he reveal my words, but my *things;*" for Christ says, "All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you."

The Holy Ghost takes the *nature* of Christ, and shows it unto us. It is easy to say, "I believe him to be God and man;" but the point is, to apprehend that he is God, and therefore able to save, and even to work impossibilities; and to believe that he is man, and therefore feels for you, sympathizes with you, and therefore is a brother born to help you in your adversities. May the Holy Ghost make you see the God-Man to-night! May he show you the humanity and the Deity of Christ, as they are most blessedly united in his adorable person; and you will be greatly comforted thereby.

The Holy Ghost shows to us the *offices* of Christ. He is Prophet, Priest, King. Especially to you, sinner, Christ is a Saviour. Now, if you know that he takes up the work of saving sinners, and that it is his business to save men, why then, dear friend, surely you will have confidence in him, and not be afraid to come to him! If I wanted my shoes mended, I should not take my hat off when I went into a cobbler's shop, and say, "Please excuse me. May I beg you to be so good as to mend my shoes?" No, it is his trade: it is his business. He is glad to see me. "What do you want, sir?" says he; and he is glad of work. And when Christ puts over his door, "Saviour," I, wanting to be saved, go to him, for I believe that he knows his calling, and that he can carry it out, and that he will be glad to see me, and that I shall not be more glad to be saved than he will be to save me. I want you to catch that idea. If the Holy Spirit will show you that, it will bring you very near to joy and peace to-night.

May the Holy Ghost also show you Christ's *engagements!* He has come into the world engaged to save sinners. He pledged himself to the Father to bring many sons unto glory, and he must do it. He has bound himself to his Father, as the Surety of the covenant, that he will bring sinners into reconciliation with God. May the Holy Ghost show that fact to you; and right gladly you will leap into the Saviour's arms!

It is very sweet when the Holy Spirit shows us the *love* of Christ,—how intensely he loves men, how he loved them of old, for his delights

were with the sons of men,—not because he had redeemed them; but he redeemed them because he loved them, and delighted in them. Christ has had an eternal love to his people.

"His heart is made of tenderness,
His bowels melt with love."

It is his heaven to bring men to heaven. It is his glory to bring sons to glory. He is never so happy as when he is receiving sinners. But if the Holy Ghost will show you the depth and the height, the length and the breadth, of the love of Christ to sinners, it will go a long way towards bringing all who are in this house to-night to accept the Saviour.

But when the Holy Ghost shows you the *mercy* of Christ,—how willingly he forgives; how he passes by iniquity, transgression, and sin; how he casts your sins into the sea, throws them behind God's back, puts them away for ever;—ah! when you see this, then will your hearts be won to him.

Specially I would desire the Holy Ghost to show you the *blood* of Christ. A Spirit-taught view of the blood of Christ is the most wonderful sight that ever a weeping eye beheld. There is your sin, your wicked, horrible, damnable sin; but Christ comes into the world, and takes the sin, and suffers in your room and place and stead; and the blood of such an One as he, perfect man and infinite God,—such blood as was poured out on Calvary's tree,—must take away sin. Oh, for a sight of it! If any of you are now despairing, and the Holy Ghost will take of the blood of Christ, and show it unto you, despair will have no place in you any longer. It must be gone, for "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin," and he that believeth in him is forgiven all his iniquities.

And if the Holy Ghost will also take of the *prayers* of Christ, and show them unto you, what a sight you will have! Christ on earth, praying till he gets into a bloody sweat; Christ in heaven, praying with all his glorious vestments on, accepted by the Father, glorified at the Father's right hand, and making intercession for transgressors, praying for you, praying for all who come to God by him, and able, therefore, to save them to the uttermost;—this is the sight you will have. A knowledge of the intercession of Christ for guilty men is enough to make despair flee away once for all. I can only tell you these things; but if the Holy Ghost will take of them, and show them unto you, oh, beloved, you will have joy and peace to-night through believing!

One thing I must add, however, and then I will leave this point, upon which we could dilate for six months, I think; that is, that *whatever the Holy Ghost shows you, you may have.* Do you see that? He takes of the things of Christ, and shows them to us; but why? Not as a boy at school does to one of his companions when he is teasing him. I remember often seeing it done. He pulls out of his pocket a beautiful apple, and shows it to his schoolmate. "There," says he, "do you see that apple?" Is he going to say, "Now I am going to give you a piece of it"? No, not he. He only shows him the apple just to tantalize him. Now, it would be blasphemy to

imagine that the Holy Ghost would show you the things of Christ, and then say, "You cannot have them." No, whatever he shows you, you may have. Whatever you see in Christ, you may have. Whatever the Holy Ghost makes you to see in the person and work of the Lord Jesus, you may have it. And he shows it to you on purpose that you may have it, for he is no Tantalus to mock us with the sight of a blessing beyond our reach; he waits to bless us. Lay that thought up in your heart; it may help you some day, if not now. You remember what God said to Jacob, "The land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it." If you find any promise in this Book, and you dare to lie down upon it, it is yours. If you can just lie down and rest on it, it is yours; for it was not put there for you to rest on it without its being fulfilled to you. Only stretch yourself on any covenant blessing, and it is yours for ever. God help us so to do!

II. But now, secondly, and very briefly, let us consider WHAT THE HOLY SPIRIT AIMS AT. Well, he aims at this, Jesus says, "He shall glorify me." When he shows us the things of Christ, his object is to glorify Christ. The Holy Spirit's object is to make Christ appear to be great and glorious to you and to me. The Lord Jesus Christ is infinitely glorious; and even the Holy Ghost cannot make him glorious except to our apprehension; but his desire is that we may see and know more of Christ, that we may honour him more, and glorify him more.

Well, how does the Holy Spirit go about this work? In this simple way, by *showing us the things of Christ.* Is not this a blessedly simple fact, that when even the Holy Ghost intends to glorify Christ, all that he does is to show us Christ? Well, but does he not put fine words together, and weave a spell of eloquence? No; he simply shows us Christ. Now, if you wanted to praise Jesus Christ to-night, what would you have to do? Why, you would only have to speak of him as he is,—holy, blessed, glorious! You would show him, as it were, in order to praise him, for there is no glorifying Christ except by making him to be seen. Then he has the glory that rightly belongs to him. No words are wanted, no descriptions are needed. "He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you."

And is it not strange that Christ should be glorified by his *being shown to you? To you*, my dear friend! Perhaps you are saying, "I am a nobody." Yes, but Christ is glorified by being shown to you. "Oh, but I am very poor, very illiterate, and besides, very wicked!" Yes, but Christ is glorified by being shown to you. Now, a great king or a great queen would not be rendered much more illustrious by being shown to a little Sunday-school girl, or exhibited to a crossing-sweeper boy. At least, they would not think so; but Christ does not act as an earthly monarch might. He reckons it to be his glory for the poorest pair of eyes that ever wept to look by faith upon him. He reckons it to be his greatest honour for the poorest man, the poorest woman, or the poorest child that ever lived, to see him in the light in which the Holy Ghost sets him. Is not this a blessed truth? I put it very simply and briefly. The Holy

Ghost, you see, glorifies Christ by showing him to sinners. Therefore, if you want to glorify Christ, do the same. Do not go and write a ponderous tome, and put fine words together. Tell sinners, in simple language, what Christ is. "I cannot praise him," says one. You do not want to praise him. Say what he is. If a man says to me, "Show me the sun," do I say, "Well, you must wait till I strike a match and light a candle, and then I will show you the sun"? That would be ridiculous, would it not? And for our candles to be held up to show Christ, is absurd. Tell what he is. Tell what he is to you. Tell what he did for you. Tell what he did for sinners. That is all. "He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you."

I will not say more on this point, except that, if any of us are to glorify Christ, we must talk much of him. We must tell what the Holy Spirit has told to us; and we must pray the Holy Spirit to bless to the minds of men the truth we speak, by enabling them to see Christ as the Spirit reveals him.

III. But now, thirdly, in both of these things,—showing unto us the things of Christ, and glorifying Christ,—THE HOLY SPIRIT IS A COMFORTER. Gracious Spirit, be a Comforter now to some poor struggling ones in the Tabernacle, by showing them the things of Christ, and by glorifying him in their salvation!

First, in showing to men the things of Christ, the Holy Spirit is a Comforter. *There is no comfort like a sight of Christ.* Sinner, your only comfort must lie in your Saviour, in his precious blood, and in his resurrection from the dead. Look that way, man! If you look inside, you will never find any comfort there. Look where the Holy Ghost looks. "He shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you." When a thing is shown to you, it is meant for you to look at it. If you want real comfort, I will tell you where to look, namely, to the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. "Oh!" say you, "but I am a wretched sinner." I know you are. You are a great deal worse than you think you are. "Oh, but I think myself the worst that ever lived." Yes, you are worse than that! You do not know half your depravity. You are worse than you ever dreamed that you were. But that is not where to look for comfort. "I am brutish," says one; "I am proud; I am self-righteous; I am envious; I have everything in me that is bad, sir, and if I have a little bit that is good sometimes, it is gone before I can see it. I am just lost, ruined, and undone." That is quite true; but I never told you to look there. Your comfort lies in this, "He shall receive of mine,"—that is, of Christ's,—"and shall shew it unto you." Your hope of transformation, of gaining a new character altogether, of eternal life, lies in Christ, who quickeneth the dead, and maketh all things new. Look away from self, and look to Christ, for he alone can save you.

A sight of Christ is the destruction of despair. "Oh, but the devil tells me that I shall be cast into hell! There is no hope for me." What matters it what the devil tells you? He was a liar from the beginning. Let him say what he likes; but if you will look away to Christ, there will be an end of the devil's power over you. If the Holy Ghost shows you what Christ came to do on the cross, and what

he is doing on his throne in heaven, there will be an end to these troublous thoughts from Satan, and you will be comforted.

Dear child of God, are you *in sorrow* to-night? May the Holy Ghost take of the things of Christ, and show them unto you! There is an end to sorrow when you see Jesus, for sorrow itself is so sweetly sanctified by the companionship of Christ which it brings to you, that you will be glad to drink of his cup and to be baptized with his baptism.

Are you *in want* to-night, without even a place where to lay your head? So, too, was he. "The Son of man hath not where to lay his head." Go to him with your trouble. He will help you to bear your poverty. He will help you to get out of it, for he is able to help you in temporal trials as well as in spiritual ones. Therefore go you to Christ. All power is given unto him in heaven and in earth. Nothing is too hard for the Lord. Go your way to him, and a sight of him will give you comfort.

Are you *persecuted?* Well, a sight of the thorn-crowned brow will take the thorn out of persecution. Are you very, very low? I think that you have all heard the story I am about to tell you, but some of you have, perhaps, forgotten it. Many years ago, when this great congregation first met in the Surrey Music Hall, and the terrible accident occurred, when many persons were either killed or wounded in the panic, I did my best to hold the people together till I heard that some were dead, and then I broke down like a man stunned, and for a fortnight or so I had little reason left. I felt so broken in heart that I thought that I should never be able to face a congregation again; and I went down to a friend's house, a few miles away, to be very quiet and still. I was walking round his garden, and I well remember the spot, and even the time, when this passage came to me, "Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour;" and this thought came into my mind at once, "You are only a soldier in the great King's army, and you may die in a ditch; but it does not matter what becomes of you as long as your King is exalted. *He*—HE is glorious. God hath highly exalted him." You have heard of the old French soldiers when they lay a-dying. If the emperor came by, when they were ready to expire, they would just raise themselves up, and gave one more cheer for their beloved leader. "*Vive l'Empereur!*" would be their dying words. And so I just thought, "*He* is exalted. What matters it about me?" and in a moment my reason was perfectly restored. I was as clear as possible. I went into the house, had family prayer, and came back to preach to my congregation on the following Sabbath, restored only by having looked to Jesus, and having seen that he was glorious. If he is to the front, what does it matter what happens to us? Rank on rank we will die in the battle if he wins the victory. Only let the Man on the White Horse win; let the King who died for us, and washed us in his precious blood, be glorified, and it is enough for us

But now, lastly, *when Christ is glorified in the heart, he acts as a Comforter, too.* I believe, brethren, that we should not have half the trouble that we have if we thought more of Christ. The fact is, that we think so much of ourselves that we get troubled. But some-

one says, "But I have so many troubles." Why should you not have a great many troubles? Who are you that you should not have troubles? "Oh, but I have had loss after loss which you do not know of!" Very likely, dear friend. I do not know of your losses, but is it any wonder that you should have them? "Oh!" says one, "I seem to be kicked about like a football." Why should you not be? What are you? "Oh!" said one poor penitent to me the other night, "for me to come to Christ, sir, after my past life, seems so mean." I said, "Yes, so it is; but, then, you *are* mean. It was a mean business of the prodigal son to come home, and eat his father's bread and the fatted calf after he had spent his substance in riotous living." It was a mean thing, was it not? But, then, the father did not think it mean. He clasped him to his bosom, and welcomed him home. Come along, you mean sinners, you that have served the devil, and now want to run away from him! Steal away from Satan at once, for my Lord is ready to receive you. You have no idea how willing he is to welcome you. He is so ready to forgive, that you have not yet guessed how much sin he can forgive. "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." Up to your necks in filth, in your very hearts saturated with the foulest iniquity; yet, if you come to Christ, he will wash you whiter than snow. "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Come along, and try my Lord.

Have exalted ideas of Christ. Oh, if a man will but have great thoughts of Christ, he shall then find his troubles lessening, and his sins disappearing! You have been putting Christ on a wrong scale altogether, I see. Perhaps even you people of God have not thought of Christ as you ought to do. I have heard of a certain commander who had led his troops into a rather difficult position. He knew what he was at, but the soldiers did not all know; and there would be a battle on the morrow. So he thought that he would go round from tent to tent, and hear what the soldiers said. He listened, and there was one of them saying to his fellows, "See what a mess we are in now! Do you see, we have only so many cavalry, and so many infantry, and we have only a small quantity of artillery. And on the other side there are so many thousands against us, so strong, so mighty, that we shall be cut to pieces in the morning." And the general drew aside the canvas, and there they saw him standing, and he said, "How many do you count *me* for?" He had won every battle that he had ever been engaged in. He was the conqueror of conquerors. "How many do you count me for?" O souls, you have never counted Christ for what he is! You have put down your sins, but you have never counted what kind of a Christ he is who has come to save you. Rather do like Luther, who says that, when the devil came to him, he brought him a long sheet containing a list of his sins, or of a great number of them, and Luther said to him, "Is that all?" "No," said the devil. "Well, go and fetch some more, then." Away went Satan to bring him another long list, as long as your arm. Said Luther, "Is that all?" "Oh, no!" said the devil, "I have more yet." "Well, go and bring them all," said Luther. "Fetch them all

out, the whole list of them." Then it was a very long black list. I think that I have heard that it would have gone round the world twice. I know that mine would. Well, what did Luther say when he saw them all? He said, "Write at the bottom of them, 'The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin!'" It does not matter how long the list is when you write those blessed words at the end of it. The sins are all gone then. Did you ever take up from your table a bill for a large sum? You felt a kind of flush coming over your face. You looked down the list. It was a rather long list of items, perhaps, from a lawyer or a builder. But when you looked at it, you saw that there was a penny stamp at the bottom, and that the account was receipted. "Oh!" you said, "I do not care how long it is; for it is all paid." So, though your sins are very many, if you have a receipt at the bottom,—if you have trusted Jesus,—your sins are all gone, drowned in the Red Sea of your Saviour's blood, and Christ is glorified in your salvation. May God the Holy Ghost bring every unsaved one here to-night to repentance and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ! The Lord bless every one of you, for his name's sake! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

JOHN XVI.

Verse 1. *These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended.*

The temptation is, when Christ is despised and rejected, for our hearts to begin to sink, and for our faith to fail. Therefore did Christ warn his disciples that they "should not be offended."

2. *They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.*

The best of men are but men at the best, and they are very apt to fail when they find persecution hot against them, especially when even religious men, of a certain kind, count it to be a religious duty to persecute the people of God.

3. *And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me.*

This verse reminds us of our Lord's prayer on the cross, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Persecution of God's people usually arises from ignorance of God the Father and God the Son.

4. *But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them. And these things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you.*

"I was your Protector; by my personal presence, I so sustained your hearts that it did not matter what trouble you fell into; but now I am going away, and therefore I give you this warning."

5, 6. *But now I go my way to him that sent me; and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou? But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart.*

We sometimes endure a needless sorrow, for the asking of a single question might remove it. Our Lord says to his disciples, "If you knew where I was going, and understood my motive in going, your sorrow at my departure would be assuaged."

7. *Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away:*

"It is for your profit to lose my personal presence, precious as that has been to you."

7. *For if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.*

The word "Comforter" might just as well have been translated "Advocate." The Holy Spirit is that Divine Advocate who pleads the cause of God in us, and for us, and so comforts us. He it is who is now with us. If Jesus Christ were still upon earth in the flesh, he could only be in one place at one time. If he were in this assembly, he could not also be in Jerusalem or in New York; but the Comforter can be in all the gatherings of the Lord's people, and with each individual believer, the wide world over.

8—12. *And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on me; of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged. I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.*

Teachers, learn wisdom from Christ. He did not try to teach his disciples everything at once; but, by teaching them one truth, he prepared them for another truth. Let us do the same with those whom we try to teach; let us dispense to them the simpler truths first, and afterwards those that are deeper and more mysterious.

13, 14. *Howbeit when he the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.*

That spirit, which does not glorify Christ, is not the Spirit of God. Hereby shall ye discern between the spirit of error and the Spirit of truth.

15, 16. *All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you. A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father.*

This is what our whole life is: "a little while." But in that little while there are little whiles of sadness, and little whiles of gladness,—little whiles in which we have Christ with us, and little whiles in which we seek him, but find him not. Blessed be God, we are going away from the land of these changing little whiles up to the place where the sun shineth in its strength for ever and ever.

17, 18. *Then said some of his disciples among themselves, What is this that he saith unto us, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and, again, a little while, and ye shall see me: and, Because I go to the Father? They said therefore, What is this that he saith, A little while? we cannot tell what he saith.*

Sometimes, when you are reading the Bible, you will come across a text of which you will say to yourselves, "What is this? We cannot tell what he saith." But do not give up reading the Bible because you cannot understand it. There is a great deal that a father says which his child cannot comprehend, yet it is a part of the child's education to be with his father, and to hear some things that he does not at first understand; but, by-and-by, it all becomes clear. So, believer, what thou knowest not now, thou shalt know hereafter.

19. *Now Jesus knew that they were desirous to ask him,*

They did not ask him, but they desired to do so, and a desire is a prayer. Where our blessed Master is present, the very desires of his people are prayers, even though their lips remain closed.

19, 20. *And said unto them, Do ye enquire among yourselves of that I said, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me? Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy.*

Oh, what a blessed promise!

21—24. *A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you. And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.*

They had asked very little, and they had never asked even that little in Christ's name; and there are but few Christians who do so even now. They ask for Christ's sake, which is a good plea, but to ask in Christ's name is better still,—when you feel conscious that you have Christ's authority to use his name, and so can put the King's own signature at the bottom of your petitions. There are some prayers to which a man dares not to set Christ's seal; but when the prayer is such that Christ himself might have offered it, then we may present it in his name, and we may be certain that we shall receive what we have asked.

25—28. *These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs: but the time cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall shew you plainly of the Father. At that day ye shall ask in my name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you: for the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God. I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father.*

Here are four unfathomable depths: "I came forth from the Father,"—there is Christ's eternal pre-existence. "And am come into the world,"—there is his incarnation. "Again, I leave the world,"—there is his death, resurrection, and ascension into the glory of God. "And go to the Father,"—there is his exaltation to the Father's right hand."

29. *His disciples said unto him, Lo, now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no proverb.*

Did you never, when reading the Bible, come across a text, that was opened up to you so sweetly that you cried out just as these disciples did, "Lo, now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no proverb"?

30, 31. *Now are we sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee: by this we believe that thou camest forth from God. Jesus answered them, Do ye now believe?*

Listen, you who imagine that you are so strong in faith, and every grace, that you think you are almost perfect: "Do ye now believe?"

32. *Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone:*

Ah, me! these were the men who said they believed in him; yet, in his time of trial, they fled like cowardly unbelievers. God help us, and sustain us, or we shall do as they did!

32, 33. *And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me. These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.*

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE SAINT'S HERITAGE AND WATCHWORD.

A Sermon

PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 3RD, 1904,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,

On Lord's-day Morning, November 5th, 1854.

"No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is of me, saith the LORD."—Isaiah liv. 17.

THIS is the fifth of November, a day notable in English history. The events which transpired on it ought never to be forgotten. On this memorable day, the Catholics, foiled in all their schemes for crushing our glorious Protestantism, devised a plot horrible and diabolical enough to render them for ever hateful amongst upright men. The vast Armada of Spain, on which they had relied, had been by the breath of God scattered and given to destruction; and now the cowardly traitors attempted, by the foulest means, the end which they could not accomplish by open warfare. Under the Houses of Parliament the deadly powder was concealed which they hoped would be the death-blow to both houses, and so annihilate the power of Protestantism; but God looked from heaven, he confounded their knavish tricks, he laid their secrets bare, and discovered their treachery. Hallelujah to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, who guarded us, and guards us still from the devices of Rome and hell! Praise to his name, we are free from the Pope of Rome, to whom—

"Britons never will be slaves."

"While for our princes they prepare,
In caverns deep a burning snare,
He shot from heaven a piercing ray
And the dark treachery brought to day."

Nor is this the only event for which the fifth of November is notable, for, in 1688, we as a nation experienced a deliverance equally as great. James II. had attempted to revive the dying cause of Popery, and the hopes of Satan were great; but sturdy Protestants would not easily lose their dearly-bought liberties, and, therefore, brought about the glorious Revolution by which King

William III. ascended the throne, and from him the succession has been happily continued until the reign of our Queen, for whom our earnest prayers shall rise.

> "Such great deliverance God hath wrought,
> And down to us salvation brought,
> And still the care of guardian heaven,
> Secures the bliss itself has given."

Blessed be God that, on this fifth of November, we can record such deliverances! Our Puritan forefathers never suffered this day to pass over without a commemoration service. So far from this day being forgotten, it ought to be remembered, not by the saturnalia of striplings, but by the songs of saints. I think I have in my possession now a record of sermons preached on the fifth of November by Matthew Henry. Many divines of his time regularly preached on this day. I think the true Protestant feeling of this country, which has lately so revived, and which has shown itself so strongly, will scarcely forgive me if I do not, this morning, return most humble and hearty thanks to that God who has delivered us from the curse, and enabled us to stand as Protestant men free to preach the gospel of Christ.

I notice, in my text, two things;—the first is, *the saint's heritage;* the second, *the saint's watchword.*

I. First, THE SAINT'S HERITAGE.

Now, do not suppose that, this morning, I shall have time, or opportunity, or talents, or power, to enter into an investigation of all the saint's heritages, especially when you remember that—

> "All things are ours; the gift of God,
> The purchase of a Saviour's blood."

Time would fail us to talk of all the possessions of the child of God. This world is his; earth is his lodge, and heaven is his home. This life is his, with all its sorrows and its joys; death is his, with all its terrors and solemn realities; and eternity is his, with its immortality and grandeur. God is his, with all his attributes. The saint has a prospective right to everything. God hath made him the heir of all things; for we are co-heirs with Christ, joint-heirs with the Son of God. We have not time enough, in a life of seventy years, even to read over once the fair inventory of the saint's possessions. There is in it such a depth unfathomable, such a height immeasurable, such an intensity of value, such a wealth of preciousness, that we should need to read it over an eternal number of times before we should ever be able to comprehend to the full the love of God. So, you see, I am not about to describe the heritage of God's people at large; but I am going to speak of the one peculiar item of that bright heritage which is mentioned in my text; and that is, *preservation:* "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn." I shall speak of this as being the heritage, not only of the Church at large, but the personal and particular possession of every true believer, every elect child of God.

First, then, there is the promise that *we shall have protection*

against the hand of men: "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper." Satan has always used the hand of man against the Church of Christ. The weapon of physical force has ever been brought to bear against the Church of God. From the day when Cain with his club struck his brother Abel, and laid him low, down to the time of Zacharias the son of Barachias, and from that time until now, this weapon has been constantly used against the Church of God. There has never been a time when a weapon has not been forged against the Church of Christ. Yea, even at the present moment, as I stand here, and with the eye of fancy survey our world, I see a fire blazing, fierce is the flame, and high its pile of fuel. I see a monarch forging a weapon; a crowned tyrant longs to bring forth chains of iron for the liberties of Europe, and smaller despots long to destroy the germ of all true liberty, "the glorious gospel of the blessed God." I see the armies ready against the Lord of hosts, ready to do battle against the servants of God.* Still, here is our sweet comfort; they may forge the weapon; they may fashion the sword; they may shut the prison door; they may confine the prisoners; they may make their instruments of torture; but they cannot prosper; for God hath said it. "He breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire." "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper." He will not let it do so.

Let us just look back through history, and see how God has fulfilled this gracious promise to his Church in past days. He has done it sometimes in this way. He has not allowed the sword so much as to touch his Church. At other times, he has suffered the sword to do its work; and yet, out of evil, he hath brought forth good. Sometimes, no weapon that has been formed against the Church has prospered, because God has not suffered it so much as to touch his Church. Think of the overthrow of Pharaoh. Look yonder, there he is, at the head of all the chivalry of Egypt, pursuing the chosen race. The sea divides to give passage to the Lord's elect. Lo, they tread the pebbly bottom of the Red sea, while the waters stand like walls of snow-white crystal on the right and on the left. But the impious monarch, all unawed by this mighty marvel, shouts, "On, on, soldiers of Memphis! Do ye fear to tread where slaves are bold?" See, they boldly dash between the watery heights; chariots and horses are in the sea, madly pursuing Israel. Ho, Israel! fear not the uplifted spear, dread not the rattling chariot; they are marching to their tombs, their weapons shall not prosper. Moses uplifts the rod of God, the parted floods embrace with eager joy, and grasp the helpless foe within their arms.

> "Over horse and over car,
> Over every man of war,
> Over Pharaoh's crown of gold
> The loud thund'ring billows roll'd.
> 'Mid the water dark and dread,
> Down they sank, they sank like lead!"

* Singularly enough, the battle of Inkermann was at this moment raging, Nov. 5, 1854.

Again, my brethren, behold another glorious proof of the promise. Haman had conceived a hatred to Mordecai, and for his sake the whole race of the Jews must perish. How cunningly he lays his plots, how readily he obtains the consent of the king, how sure is he of his revenge! Even now, in imagination, he sees Mordecai swinging on the lofty gallows, and all his kindred given to slaughter. Ah, thou enemy, delight in thine imagination, for it shall be disappointed! Rejoice in thy design, but it shall be utterly confounded! There is a God in the courts of heaven, and an Esther in the palace of Shushan. Thou thyself shalt be hanged on thine own gallows, and the race of David shall revenge the deed of the Agagite upon his sons. O Israel, well mayest thou rejoice at the feast of Purim, for the weapon of the mighty is broken! Nor here alone can we see the promise fulfilled; for time would fail me to tell of conquered Amalek and routed Midian. Scarcely can I speak of Philistia and her giants given to the beasts of prey, or Edom slaughtered by the sword. Let the armies witness who fled at the fancied rumbling of chariots, or that host who in one night became the inhabitants of the realms of death. Let the warriors, who rest with their rusted swords beneath their earthy pillows, rise from their long sleep, and confess the futility of their efforts; yea, let monarchs now in the chains of hell bear witness to their own utter confusion when the Lord appeared in battle for his chosen. March on, despot; bid thy slaves rise against the free, crush the helpless, and usurp the dominions of thy neighbour; but know that the Lord is mightier than thou art. Thy Northern hordes are not invincible; and Britons, with the help of God, shall teach thee that in vain thou liftest the hand of robbery. Thou contendest with a nation in whose midst the elect of God are praying against thee, and thou shalt know that God has said unto her holy seed, "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper."

But now another view of the subject presents itself. Sometimes God has suffered the enemy to exult over us, and the sword has been used with terrible effect. There have been dark and gloomy days for the chosen Church of Christ, when persecution has cried "Havoc, and let slip the dogs of war." When blood has flowed like water over the land, our enemies have triumphed. The martyr was bound to the stake, or was crucified upon the tree; the pastor was cut off, and the flocks were scattered. Cruel torture, awful suffering, was endured by the saints of God. The elect cried, and said, "O Lord, how long? Let it repent thee concerning thy servants." The enemy laughed, and said, "Ah! ah! so would we have it." Zion was under a cloud. Her precious saints, comparable to fine gold, were esteemed as earthen vessels, the work of the hands of the potter, and her princes were trodden down like mire in the streets. O my soul, how was it, in that sad day, when the enemy came upon her like a flood, and she could scarcely lift up the standard of the Lord against him? O God, there was an hour when thou would'st not hear the cry of thine elect! It seemed as if thine ear was deaf. The plaint of the widow was unheeded; the groans, the agonies, and the cries of martyrs were unnoticed; and thou

didst still allow the enemy to vex thy children. Persecution shook the land, and sent forth its burning lava of cruelty, devastating the fair fields of the Church of God. But did the enemy prosper? Did he succeed? Did persecution destroy God's Church? Did the weapon formed against us prosper? No! Each time that the Church had a wave of persecution pass over her, she rose out of it, and lifted her fair countenance, "fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners." She was all the more glorious for it all. Every time her blood was shed, each drop became a man, and each man thus converted stood prepared to pour out the vital current from his veins to defend the cause of God and truth. Ah! those were times when, instead of the Church being diminished and brought low, God did multiply her, and persecution worked for her good instead of causing her evil. The persecutor did not destroy the Church. The ship of Christ's Church never sails so well as when she is rocked from side to side by the winds of persecution, and when, at every lurch, she is well-nigh overwhelmed. Nothing has helped God's Church so much as persecution; she has been increased and strengthened by it.

You will remember that this is not only the heritage of the Church at large, but also of every individual believer. And now I can speak to some poor souls who are in this place of worship. O brother, O sister, there is a word for thee this morning! "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper." There are some dear sisters, who come into this house of prayer under fear of brutal husbands; and there are sons and daughters who have cruel fathers. I know there are some here who meet with dire and terrible persecution because they come to the house of God. Little do some of us know, when we meet here, what our neighbour in the same seat has had to suffer through coming to this house of prayer. I could a tale unfold that would ruffle up your spirits,—a tale of persecution endured by some of the saints of God in this place. This is a word for you, my friend: "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper." The blow of a brutal husband shall not injure you; it may injure your body, but it cannot injure your soul. "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." Why should you fear men when God is on your side? Remember that Christ has said, "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." Hold on, young man; hold on, young woman; still continue in the fear of God, and you shall find that persecution shall work for your good. But mark thee, persecutor,—if thou art here this morning,—there is a chain, in hell, of hot iron that shall be bound around thy waist; there are fiends that have whips of fire, and they shall scourge thy soul throughout eternity, because thou darest to put a stumbling-block in the way of God's children. Remember what the Lord Jesus said: "Whoso shall offend one of these little ones, which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone

were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea."

The second portion of the saint's heritage is, "every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn." *Here is protection from the tongue of men.* Satan leaves no stone unturned against the Church of God. He uses not simply the hand; but, what is oftener a sharper weapon, the tongue. We can bear a blow, sometimes, but we cannot endure an insult. There is a great power in the tongue. We can rise from a blow which smote us to the ground; but we cannot so easily recover from slander, that lays the character low; yet the promise of the text is, "Every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn."

Look at the Church at large, and see how she has condemned her adversaries. When first she came into the world, she had to oppose Judaism; but she has condemned it, and its doctrines are now effete: then up started philosophers, and they said that the gospel was all foolishness, because they found nothing of worldly wisdom in it. But what has become of the philosopher now? Where is the Stoic who boasted of his wisdom? Where the Epicurean who lectured in the streets of Greece? Where are they now? They are gone, and their names are only used to describe things that have ceased to be. Then Satan invented Mohammedanism in order to oppose the truth of God; but the Church of God has condemned that long ago. The cross has made the crescent wane.

Where are the various systems of infidelity which have arisen one after another? They are gone quite out of sight. Now and then we have felt rather alarmed, because we have heard that some great people were going to prove that the Bible was not true, and that our creed was not sound. I remember talking with an old man, who said to me, "Ah, sir, this geology will quite ruin man's belief in the Bible!" But, geology, instead of opposing the gospel, furnishes many powerful confirmations of the facts of revelation. Each one of the sciences has, in its imperfect condition, been used as a battering-ram against the truth of God; but, as soon as it has been better understood, it has been made a pillar in Zion's citadel. Fear not, O sons of God, that the perversions of men of science can damage our cause! Lying tongues we shall condemn. O infidelity, abortion of the night, thou hast been condemned a thousand times! Thou art a Protean creature, changing thy shape as the ages come and go. Once thou wast a laughing idiotic plaything for Voltaire; then a bullying blasphemer with Tom Paine; then a cruel, blood-drinking fiend, fit mate for Robespierre; anon a speculating theorist with Owen; and now a worldly, gross secularizing thing for impious lecturers and their profane admirers. I fear thee not, infidelity; thou art an asp, biting at iron, spending thy spleen, and breaking thy fangs.

My friends, did you ever, in imagination, walk the centuries, and mark the rise and fall of various empires of unbelief? If so, you seemed to be on a battlefield, and to see corpses all round you. You ask the name of the dead, and someone replies that it is the corpse of such-and-such a system, or the carcase of such-and-such a

theory; and, mark you, as surely as time rolls on, the now rampant style of infidelity will perish, and, in fifty years, we shall see the skeleton of an exploded scheme, and its epitaph will be, "Here lies a fool, called, of old, a Secularist." What shall we say of Mormonism, the haggard superstition of the West; or of Puseyism, the express image of Popery; or of Socinian and Arian heresies, of Arminian perversions, or of Antinomian abuse? What shall we say of each of these errors but that their death-knell shall soon toll, and these children of hell shall sink back to their birthplace in the pit. Yon old and crazy church upon the seven hills has dared to hurl its anathemas at the saints of the Lord; and still doth she hold the wine-cup of abomination in her hand; and still is she robed in scarlet, and her sway is over many waters; but she shall be condemned in judgment. Lo, the millstone in the hand of the archangel hastens to its fall, and Babylon the Great shall perish with a terrible overthrow. Then shall this cry go up from the Church of God, "Shout, O heavens, for the Lord hath done it; sing, O ye inhabitants of the earth, for the promise is accomplished, and every opposing tongue is condemned!"

This promise is the personal heritage of each child of God: "Every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn." What a sweet thought that is to me, for there are many tongues busy about me. Some say, "He is a good man;" others say, "He is deceiving the people." Well, if God will convert more sinners, and bring more into his Church, men may say what they like about me. I am not careful to answer any of the self-thought infallibles in this matter. You never hear of a preacher who gathers a crowd, or who is doing any good, but he is sure to be slandered, and vilified; but here is a promise for him: "Every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn." Then, the more accusers, the more acquittals; the more slander, the more honour; so the enemy may slander us as much as he pleases.

But I know that there are some of my hearers, who believe and love the doctrines of grace; and, sometimes, you are called to dispute and contend for them. I trust you are; I hope you love to "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints." I know what is the case with many of you; when you come to talk with an infidel, you do not know what to say. Has it not been so with you many a time? You have said, "I almost wish I could hold my tongue, for the man has confounded me;" yet remember, "Every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn." The last time you had that dispute, you thought that your adversary conquered, did you not? You thought wrongly. He might glory in his intellectual prowess; he might say, "Oh, that man is nothing to me." But leave him alone till he gets to bed; and when darkness is all round him, he will begin to think seriously. He conquered you in appearance; but now you master him. Wait till he is sick, and then your words shall ring in his ears; they shall come up again from the grave, if he should survive you, and you will conquer him then. Do not be afraid to argue for the truth. Do not think that infidels are wise men; or that Arminians are so exceedingly

learned. Stand up for the truth; and there is so much solid learning, and real truth, to be found in the doctrines that we uphold, that none of you need be ashamed of them. They are mighty, and must prevail. The mighty God of Jacob, by the demonstration of the Holy Ghost, make them triumphant!

There is one who has risen against me in judgment many a time, and I daresay he has troubled many of the dear people of the Lord here;—that is, Satan. He is always rising in judgment against us. Whenever we get into a little trouble, he comes, and says, "You are no saint." If we commit a sin, he says, "You would not sin like that if you had been a child of God; you have no interest in the covenant; you have deceived yourself." How many times Satan has risen against me in judgment, and so risen that I have been fool enough to heed what he said! I have told him, sometimes, "You are a liar, and the father of lies;" but, at other times, I have believed his malicious accusations. It is no easy thing to stand against the insinuations of the evil one. You, my brethren, are not ignorant of his devices. He has set conscience at you, the hell-hounds of legal convictions have howled upon you, and the drum of terrible doom has thundered in your ears; then up has stood the fiend himself, and denied your union with Jesus, claiming you as his own prey and portion. Ah, but how glorious was the moment when our Advocate entered the forum of conscience, and assured us that he had pleaded our cause in the Court of King's Bench above! And, oh, when he showed us the adversary's brief spoiled by the nails of the cross, we felt that the tongue of Satan was condemned, and his calumnies hushed. Glorious Counsellor, all praise be to thine adorable name!

Let the saints know also that they shall soon have a yet more public triumph over their cruel enemy. At the day of judgment, the foe of God and man shall be dragged from his cell, shall lift his brazen front with thunder scarred, receive his sentence, and begin a hell more terrible than all he has endured before. O saint, dost thou not know that thou shalt judge him? Know ye not that ye shall judge angels? Ye sons of God shall sit as co-assessors with his first-born Son; and when he shall pronounce the doom of the old dragon, ye shall solemnly say "Amen" to the sentence. Rejoice, O poor tried one; thou shalt tread upon the lion and the dragon, thy foot shall be upon the head of thine enemy, and thou shalt know that the promise of this text is fulfilled in thine own experience: "Every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn."

Now, beloved, I think I have spoken sufficiently, for the present, on this glorious heritage of the saints of God. The weapons forged against us are not to prosper, and the tongues raised against us are to be condemned.

II. Now I am to speak upon THE SAINT'S WATCHWORD. What is that? "This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord."

In ancient times, as well as at the present time, armies used to have their watchwords, by which they might recognize one another

in the dark. We want a watchword now. It is very difficult to tell the children of God unless we have certain signs. God himself gives us the watchword: "Their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord." You can always tell a saint of God by this watchword. If he says, "My righteousness is of God," you may safely believe that he is a disciple of Jesus Christ. If he does not understand our shibboleth, he may not have lived in that country where they speak the pure language of Canaan, and that may excuse defects in his language. He may differ from us in some points, but if he sincerely says, "My righteousness is of God," you may safely conclude that he is not an enemy of the truth; I mean, "THE TRUTH as it is in Jesus."

We may understand this watchword in two senses. It may mean that *Christian justification in the eyes of the world is of God;* and also that *their righteousness, their salvation, is of God.* There is to be a time when God's children shall come out clear of all slander, when falsehood shall be swept away, and they shall stand forth justified even by their enemies. Their slanderers shall have nothing to say against them then. They shall share in the admiration which an assembled universe shall be constrained to give to him who doeth all things well. But this vindication will not be brought about by their own efforts. They have not been anxious to avoid reproach for Christ's sake. They have not wept and bemoaned themselves because they were counted the offscouring of all things. No; their righteousness, their entire clearing from the aspersions of malice, and the calumnies of envy, will come from Jehovah. The escutcheon of the Church is in the Lord's hands, and he will wipe away every blot from it. The character of the saints, God himself shall vindicate; and all liars shall have their portion in the lake of fire and brimstone. Let this be the motto on the pennon on our lance; let this be our cheering watchword: "Our righteousness is of the Lord."

Now for the second meaning. "Their justifying righteousness is of me," saith the Lord. If I wished to test you all, and might ask you only one question, I would ask this: What is your righteousness? Come along in single file. What is *your* righteousness? "Oh, I am as good as my neighbours!" Go along with you; you are not my comrade. What is *your* righteousness? "Well, I am rather better than my neighbours, for I go to chapel regularly." Off with you, sir; you do not know the watchword. And you next; what is *your* righteousness? "I have been baptized, and am a member of the church." Yes, and so you may be; but if that is your only hope, you are still in the gall of bitterness. Now, you next; what is *your* hope? "Oh, I do all I can, and Christ makes up the rest." Rubbish! you are a Babylonian, you are no Israelite; Christ is no make-weight;—away with you. Here comes the last. What is *your* righteousness? "My righteousness is filthy rags, except the righteousness which I have, which Christ wrought out for me on Calvary, which is imputed to me by God himself, and which makes me pure and spotless as an angel." Ah, brother, you and I are fellow-soldiers; I have found you out; that is the watchword: "Your righteousness is of me,

saith the Lord." I do not ask whether you are Churchmen, or Methodists, or Independents, or Baptists, if you do but know this watchword: "Your righteousness is of me, saith the Lord." I can leave all those minor things if you can sing,—

> "Jesus, thy blood and righteousness
> My beauty are, my glorious dress."

Tell me that you have any other trust, and I will have nothing to do with you. Tell me that you can work out your own salvation without God's help, and I will not acknowledge you as my brother. But if you tell me that, from first to last, you rely only on Jesus, then I acknowledge you as my fellow-soldier, and I am glad to see you wherever I meet you.

But, to wind up, we have had the heritage of the saints, and we have had the watchword of the saints, what more shall I say? I will say,—How well God has kept his promise! Has he not? You must know that it is just 249 years ago—it will be 250 next year,—the fifth Jubilee,—since, under the Parliament House the train was laid, and the gunpowder ready, to blow up the Houses of Lords and Commons, and utterly to destroy the nation. Ah, how Satan gloated over the thought that he should destroy the Church of God, and exalt his darlings to honour in the places of those who loved the Lord! The plotters said, "The foundations will be destroyed, and then what will the righteous do?" They thought that surely their end would be accomplished; but how sadly were they disappointed! They were discovered. Down went the soldiers, and found out the plot; and Popery has been prevented from spreading throughout Great Britain. Blessed be the name of the Lord, "No weapon that is formed against his Church shall prosper." We glory because we can put our finger upon the page of history, and exclaim, "God is true, and past events are witnesses of his faithfulness."

O beloved, has the Holy Ghost given you an inwrought knowledge of the truth of this promise of God? Have you experienced blessed deliverances from the right hand of the Most High? Many of you, I fear, have neither part nor lot in this matter, and you have true cause to lament your terrible loss in being unable to grasp these covenant blessings. But some of us may now anticipate the hour when we shall obtain complete redemption with all the blood-bought family; and then, ah, then, how shall we with rapture review delivering grace in all its thousand instances! Hark! hark! methought I heard sweet music; methought I heard a song descending from the regions up above, borne down by gales whose breath is sweet as that which comes from the spice groves of Araby. I hear a sound, not earthly;—it is, it must be celestial, for no mortal sonnets can with these compare. O river of harmony, where are the lips from which thou flowest? The heavens are opened; I see a host in white robes, with crowns upon their heads, and palm branches in their hands. Who are these? and whence come they? These are they who have passed through great tribulation, and who tell us, "We have whitened our robes in the blood of the Lamb;

therefore are we without fault before the throne of God, and we serve him day and night in his temple." Holy ones, repeat your song; saints of God, re-echo the chorus; repeat it yet again, that these ears may hear it. What do you sing? "No weapon that is formed against us hath prospered; every tongue that hath risen against us in judgment we have condemned. This is our heritage, our righteousness is of the Lord." Now, saints below, take up the strain, and sing it by holy, joyous, confident anticipation,—

"No weapon hath prosper'd, the foe is o'ercome;
No tongue hath succeeded, the wise ones are dumb;
The Lord is our glory, and each of the host
Shall yet shout 'Hosannah!' on Canaan's fair coast."

Glory be to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, world without end! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

ISAIAH XLIII. 14—28; AND XLIV. 1—8.

Chapter xliii. Verses 14—16. *Thus saith the LORD, your redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; For your sake I have sent to Babylon, and have brought down all their nobles, and the Chaldeans, whose cry is in the ships. I am the LORD, your Holy One, the creator of Israel, your King. Thus saith the LORD, which maketh a way in the sea, and a path in the mighty waters;*

Great events in history all have some connection with the Church of Christ. We may not always be able to see it, but we may rest assured that it is so. The rise and fall of empires have a great deal to do with the chosen people of God. So here he reminds them of what he did in the ancient days when he smote Egypt at the Red sea, and made a path for his people through the mighty waters.

17. *Which bringeth forth the chariot and horse, the army and the power; they shall lie down together, they shall not rise: they are extinct, they are quenched as tow.*

There is a little blaze and a little smoke, and then all is over with the tow. So shall it be with those who set themselves up against the Lord; he shall confound their wisdom, and humble their pride.

18, 19, *Remember ye not the former things, neither consider the things of old. Behold I will do a new thing;*

What God has done once, he can do again; but he can also make yet grander and more marvellous displays of his power and grace than he has ever yet given.

19, 20. *Now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert. The beast of the field shall honour me, the dragons and the owls: because I give waters in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert, to give drink to my people, my chosen.*

If then, O child of God, thou art in sore distress; if all around thee is comfortless as a waste, howling wilderness; yet do not despair: God can make a way for thee even there, and can supply thy needs. He can open up a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the midst of the desert; joy and rejoicing may come to thee even in the depths of thy distress.

21. *This people have I formed for myself; they shall shew forth my praise.*

He will not be disappointed in his people. He made them that he might

get glory out of them, and he will surely have it; none shall be able to prevent it.

22—24. *But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob; but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel. Thou hast not brought me the small cattle of thy burnt offerings; neither hast thou honoured me with thy sacrifices. I have not caused thee to serve with an offering, nor wearied thee with incense. Thou hast brought me no sweet cane with money, neither hast thou filled me with the fat of thy sacrifices: but thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities.*

Remember that this is the wearied Lord who is speaking, the Lord whose patience seems to be well-nigh exhausted by the provocations of his people; yet how wonderful is his message to them!

25, 26. *I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for my own sake, and will not remember thy sins. Put me in remembrance: let us plead together: declare thou, that thou mayest be justified.*

"If thou hast anything to say in thine own defence, out with it. Come to me, and let the cause of this quarrel be removed; let me hear thy plea if thou hast one."

27, 28. *Thy first father hath sinned, and thy teachers have transgressed against me. Therefore I have profaned the princes of the sanctuary, and have given Jacob to the curse, and Israel to reproaches.*

God justifies himself for his heavy strokes upon Israel, tells them that the reason lay in their own sin.

Chapter xliv. Verses 1—3. *Yet now hear, O Jacob my servant; and Israel, whom I have chosen. Thus saith the LORD, that made thee, and formed thee from the womb, which will help thee; Fear not O Jacob, my servant; and thou, Jesurun, whom I have chosen. For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring:*

"Think not that I am anxious to punish you for your sin. Only return to me, and I will be delighted to bless you. I will help you out of your troubles; I will supply your needs; and not only so, but I will bless your children generation after generation."

4, 5. *And they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses. One shall say, I am the LORD'S; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the LORD, and surname himself by the name of Israel.*

God still has power over human hearts; he can bring back to himself his wandering children.

6. *Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God.*

He gathers up all into himself: as he is the first and the last, where is there space for any other god? He, therefore, would have all our hearts; he would have us love, and adore, and serve him, and him alone.

7. *And who, as I, shall call, and shall declare it, and set it in order for me, since I appointed the ancient people? and the things that are coming, and shall come, let them shew unto them.*

If these idols be gods, let them prophesy, and tell what is to happen in the future; but they cannot even speak to one another.

8. *Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have not I told thee from that time, and have declared it? ye are even my witnesses. Is there a God beside me? yea, there is no God; I know not any.*

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

JOB'S SURE KNOWLEDGE.

A Sermon

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DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

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"For I know that my Redeemer liveth."—Job xix. 25.

I DARESAY you know that there are a great many difficulties about the translation of this passage. It is a very complicated piece of Hebrew, partly, I suppose, owing to its great antiquity, being found in what is, probably, one of the oldest Books of the Bible. Besides that, different persons have tried to translate it according to their own varying views. The Jews stiffly fight against the notion of the Messiah and his resurrection being found in this verse, while many Christian commentators see here everything that we can find in the New Testament, and translate the passage as though Job were as well instructed in this matter as we are now that Christ "hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." Others say that, while there is, no doubt, a reference to the person and the resurrection of Christ, yet it is not so vivid as some seem to think.

Personally, I am quite satisfied with the translation given in our Authorized Version; yet it has occurred to me that, possibly, Job himself may not have known the full meaning of all that he said. Imagine the patriarch driven into a corner, badgered by his so-called friends, charged by them with all manner of evils until he is quite boiling over with indignation, and, at the same time, smarting under terrible bodily diseases and the dreadful losses which he has sustained; and, at last, he bursts out with this exclamation, "I shall be vindicated one day; I am sure I shall. I know that my Vindicator liveth. I am sure that there is One who will vindicate me; and if he never clears my name and reputation as long as I live, it will be done afterwards. There must be a just God, in heaven, who will see me righted; and even though worms devour my body until the last relic of it has passed away, I do verily believe that, somehow, in the far-off ages, I shall be vindicated." He throws his faith forward to some tremendous era which he anticipates, and he declares that there will be found then, as he believes there is

alive even now, a Goel, a Kinsman, an Avenger, who will stand up for him, and set right all this wrong. He cannot conceive that God will permit such gross injustice to be done as for a man, who has walked as he has walked, to be brought so low, and then to be stung with such unfounded accusations; he is positive that there must be a Vindicator for him somewhere, and he appeals to that last dread tribunal, which he dimly sees in the far-off future, and he believes that someone will be found to stand up successfully for him there.

If that be the case, you will see that Job was driven, perhaps beyond his former knowledge, by his very pains and trials. He may but dimly have perceived a future state, but his condition revealed to him the necessity for such a state. He felt that, if the righteous suffer so much in this life, often apparently without any just cause, and if the wicked prosper, then there must be another state in which God will set right the wrongs of this, and rectify the apparent inequalities of his providence here. Job realized that; and, possibly, his deep griefs may have been the channel of another revelation to him, namely, that there was a mysterious Divine Being, concerning whom that dark prophecy had been handed down from the garden of Eden itself, "The Seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." He felt sure that, for those who were wronged as he had been, there must be an Advocate provided. He had before complained that there was no Umpire—no "Daysman"—to stand between them both; but now he asks for an Advocate, and he feels that there must be one, yea, he knows that there is, and he declares that, somewhere or other, there is an Advocate who will, some day or other, set right all that concerns him, let things go now as they may. So, possibly, Job was seeing more than he had ever seen before of that mysterious One who pleads the cause of those who are oppressed, and shows himself strong, on their behalf, at the right hand of God.

I am not going to enter into any discussion of the matter, but shall use the passage in the full Evangelical sense. Job may have known all that we now know concerning Christ, for he may have had special revelations and manifestations. We do not find all that we know in his Book, yet he may have meant all that I shall say in this discourse. If he did not mean it, I trust that we shall, under the gracious guidance of the Holy Spirit.

I. I shall speak first upon this point,—JOB HAD A TRUE FRIEND AMID HIS MISTAKEN FRIENDS.

These men were miserable comforters, but Job had a real Comforter; they were estranged from him, but he had a true Friend left; so he said, "I know that my Goel liveth." That is the Hebrew word; I suppose you all know that it means the person nearest akin to him, who, because he was nearest akin, was bound to take up his cause. If a man was slain by misadventure, the goel pursued the one who had slain him, and endeavoured to avenge his death. If a person fell into debt, and was sold into slavery because of the debt, his goel, if he was able, had to redeem him; and hence we get the word "redeemer." Or if estates became mortgaged

through poverty, it was the duty of the next of kin to redeem them, if possible; so again we get the idea of redeemer. But the word "goel" is more comprehensive than the word redeemer, so we will begin with its first meaning.

Job, in the midst of his false friends, had *One whom he called his Kinsman.* "I know," he said, "that my Kinsman liveth." We interpret that word "Kinsman" as meaning our Lord Jesus Christ, and we sing,—

> "Jesus, our Kinsman and our God,
> Arrayed in majesty and blood,
> Thou art our life; our souls in thee
> Possess a full felicity."

I want you, just now, to think of Jesus Christ as your Kinsman if you are really in him, for he is indeed the nearest akin to you of any,—bone of your bone, and flesh of your flesh. "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same." Now, your own flesh and blood, as you call them, are not so near to you in real kinship as Jesus is; for, often, you will find flesh and blood near akin by birth but not by sympathy. Two brothers may be, spiritually, very different from one another, and may not be able to enter into each other's trials at all; but this Kinsman participates in every pang that rends your heart; he knows your constitution, your weakness, your sensitiveness, the particular trial that cuts you to the quick, for in all your afflictions he was afflicted. Thus he is nearer to you than the nearest of earthly kin can possibly be, for he enters more fully into the whole of your life; he seems to have gone through it all, and he still goes through it all in his constant sympathy with you.

Christ's kinship with his people is to be thought of with great comfort because it is voluntary. We have some, perhaps, who are akin to us, yet who wish they were not. Many a time, when a rich man has poor relations, he is half ashamed of the kinship between them, and wishes that it did not exist. Shame upon him for thinking so! But our Lord Jesus Christ's relationship to us is no accident of birth; it was voluntarily assumed by him. He would be one with us because he loved us; nothing could satisfy him till he had come to this earth, and been made one flesh with his Church. "For this cause," it is said concerning marriage, "shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery," said Paul; "but I speak concerning Christ and the Church." And, verily, so was it with Christ, as the poet sings,—

> "'Yea,' saith the Lord, 'with her I'll go
> Through all the depths of care and woe;
> And on the cross will even dare
> The bitter pangs of death to bear.'"

This he did because he would be one flesh with his people, and that is a very near kinship which comes as close as that, and which willingly does so,—not by force, but by voluntary choice.

And, further, this is a kinship of which Jesus is never ashamed.

We have known or heard of the prosperous man who has been ashamed of his poor old mother, and of the educated young man who has looked down with scorn upon the very father who has toiled and slaved in order to give him the advantages of such an education. It is disgraceful that there should ever be such ingrates; but it is written concerning our great Kinsman, "He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one; for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren." He declares to the whole universe, concerning those persecuted ones, those who are ridiculed as being fools, "They are my brethren." The Prince of glory, whose fingers are adorned with stars of light like rings of priceless value, calls the poor bedridden woman, who is a child of God, his sister, and calls the humble, toiling, labouring man, who walks with him, his brother; and he is not ashamed to do so. Think, beloved, with intensest gratitude, of this great Kinsman of yours, who is so near of kin to you,—voluntarily near of kin, and not ashamed to own the kinship.

Remember, too, that your Kinsman liveth in this respect,—that he will always be your Kinsman. The closest ties of earthly relationship must, to a great extent, end in death, for there are no husbands and wives, as such, in heaven. There cannot be, "for in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven." There are other ties, of a spiritual kind, that will far outshine the best of bonds that linked us together here; but, when all other ties are broken, Jesus will always be our Kinsman, our Brother. We shall find the fraternal relationship better understood, more fully enjoyed, and more clearly manifested up there than it ever can be here. When all other relationships are growing dim, this blessed eternal kinship will shine out the more brightly. So I want all of you, who truly love the Lord Jesus Christ, to interpret my text in this way: "I know that my Kinsman liveth," and to feel how honoured you are to have such a Kinsman as Christ is. Ruth was highly privileged in having such a kinsman as Boaz, who was not content for her to glean in his fields, but who took her as his wife; and your great Kinsman intends that you should be betrothed unto him for ever, and he will bring you to his heavenly home at the marriage supper of the Lamb.

There was a second meaning to the word goel, arising out of the first,—*Job's Kinsman would become his Vindicator.* It was the kinsman's duty to defend the rights of his needy relative, so Job intended here to say, "I know that my Vindicator liveth;" and the Lord Jesus Christ is the Vindicator of his people from all false charges. It is not easy for Christians to live in this world without being slandered and misrepresented; certainly, those of us who live in the full blaze of public life can hardly utter a word without having it twisted, and tortured, and misconstrued. We are often represented as saying what we loathe even to think; yet we must not be surprised at that. The world loves lying,—it always has done so, and it always will. Even in private life you may meet with similar cruel treatment; there are some of God's best children who lie under reproach by the year together. The very things which

they would not tolerate for a moment are laid to their charge, and they are thought to be guilty of them, and even good people hold up their hands in pious horror at them, though they are perfectly innocent all the while. Well, beloved, ever remember that your Vindicator liveth. Do not be too much concerned to clear your own character; above all, do not attempt to vindicate yourself in a court of law, but say to yourself, "I know that my Vindicator liveth." When he cometh, "then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." His people may be under a cloud now; but, when he appeareth, the cloud shall break, and their true glory shall be seen. The greater the obloquy under which any of us have unjustly lived on earth, the greater will be the joy and the honour which will be vouchsafed to us in the day when Christ shall clear our character from all the shameful aspersions that have been brought against us. All will be cleared up in that day, so leave the accusations alone, knowing that your Vindicator liveth.

There is another most comforting thought,—that our Vindicator will clear us from true charges as well as false ones. As for the false charges, what do they matter? It is the true ones that really concern us: can Christ clear us from them? Yes, that he can. Remember how the apostle John writes, "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." You see, it is not merely, if we have been said to sin when we did not, but if we really sin, "we have an Advocate with the Father." O blessed Advocate, how dost thou clear thy people of the sin which they have actually committed? Why, in this way; he took it upon himself,—the awful load of their guilt,—and suffered the full penalty for it. So there he stands before the eternal throne, to plead their cause; and, as he does so, he says, "Those sins, committed by my people,—I have taken them upon myself, and suffered in the room, and place, and stead of all who will believe in me." O thou blessed Kinsman, how glorious art thou in thy grace, in that thou hast so completely undertaken our cause that thou hast been made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in thee! Yes, beloved, Jesus will plead the merit of his precious blood and his spotless righteousness; and, before that powerful pleading, our sins and our transgressions shall sink beneath the flood, and shall not be remembered against us any more for ever.

In that day, too, our Vindicator will defend us against all the accusations of Satan. Our great adversary often assails and attacks us here, and the Lord says to him, as he did concerning Joshua the high priest, "The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan; even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee!" We may tell the devil, when we stand foot to foot with him, and are sore beset, that our Vindicator liveth, and we may quote to him that grand promise, "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly," because our Vindicator, who is to bruise the serpent's head, still liveth. The old serpent may nibble at your heel for a while, as he did at your Master's, but you, in the strength of your Lord, shall bruise his head; and whatsoever other adversary of your soul there may be, at any time, rest you in quiet confidence. Even if that

adversary is permitted to prevail over you for a while, say unto him, "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me."

So you have two meanings of the word goel,—my Kinsman, my Vindicator, liveth. I hope you who are greatly tempted and tried, and you who are persecuted and oppressed, will catch that second meaning, and commit your cause unto God. "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath; for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." Be slow to anger; fret not yourselves because of the wicked man that prospereth in his evil way, and think not of being revenged upon your oppressors. In patience and quietness possess your souls, knowing that your time of vindication will surely come, for your Vindicator liveth.

Then the third meaning of the word goel certainly is redeemer, so Job could say, "*I know that my Redeemer liveth.*" As I have already said, the next of kin, in the process of vindicating his poor Kinsman, was accustomed to redeem him from bondage, or to redeem any part of his estate that might be under mortgage. So, let us next think of how the Lord Jesus Christ hath redeemed us from bondage. Having broken the law of God, we were in bondage to that law; we had received the spirit of bondage again to fear. But we, who have believed in Jesus, our Kinsman, can say that he hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us, and that we are no longer in bondage. We were also in bondage under sin, as Paul wrote, "I am carnal, sold under sin;" but Christ has come, and broken the power of sin in us, so that its reigning power is subdued; and though it still striveth to get the mastery, and often maketh us to groan within ourselves, even as Paul did, yet do we, with him, thank God, who giveth us the victory, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

There are two redemptions,—redemption by price and redemption by power, and both of these Christ hath wrought for us;—by price, by his sacrifice upon the cross of Calvary; and by power, by his Divine Spirit coming into our heart, and renewing our soul. Ought we not unceasingly to bless the Lord who hath redeemed us from under the law, having paid the penalty for the commands which we had broken, and who hath also redeemed us from the power of sin? "I know that my Redeemer liveth," then I know that I am a free man; for if the Son makes us free, then are we free indeed. I know that he paid the price for my soul's eternal redemption, then may my soul continually exult in him, and rejoice in the liberty wherewith he hath made me free.

But, as I have already reminded you, the redeemer was also accustomed to redeem the estate as well as the person of his kinsman. We had lost everything. Father Adam had put everything under a heavy mortgage, and we could not even meet the interest on it; but the whole estate is unmortgaged now, even to paradise itself. Does someone ask, "Is there not any mortgage even upon paradise?" I answer,—No; for Christ said to the dying thief, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise;" so it is clear that he has entered

paradise, and claimed it on his people's behalf. Jesus Christ hath said, in the words of the psalmist, "I restored that which I took not away." Bankrupt debtors, through the Lord's sovereign grace, you are no longer under any liabilities because of your sin if Christ be accepted by you as your Goel and Redeemer. He hath restored to you the estates which your first father, Adam, had lost; and he hath made you heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ, through the wondrous redemption which he wrought for you upon the cross of Calvary.

Suck the honey, if you can, out of these three glorious truths, and you will be able to do so in proportion as you can personally use the words of the text, "'I know that my Redeemer liveth.' I know that he lives who will vindicate my character, and rectify my wrongs. I know, too, that he lives who hath redeemed me from sin and hell; and even though I die, I know that he will redeem me from the power of the grave, and that he will enable me to say, 'O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?'"

Dwell on the remembrance that you have such a Divine Helper, and then let us pass on to another thought, at which I will only briefly hint as I proceed to another part of my theme.

II. The second point is this,—JOB HAD REAL PROPERTY AMID ABSOLUTE POVERTY.

Job had lost everything,—every stick and stone that he possessed, he had lost his children, and he had lost his wife, too, for all practical purposes, for she had not acted like a wife to him in his time of trial. Poor Job, he had lost everything else, but he had not lost his Redeemer. Notice, he does not say, "I know that my wife and my children live;" but he says, "I know that my Redeemer liveth." Ah! "my Redeemer,"—he has not lost him, so he has the best of all possessions still left. Looking up to him, by faith, with the tears of joy standing in his eyes, he says, "Yes, he is my Redeemer, and he still lives; I accept him as mine, and I will cling to him for ever." Can you, beloved friends, not merely rejoice in Christ as *the* Redeemer, but also as *your* Redeemer? Have you personally accepted him as your Redeemer? Have you personally trusted him with your soul, wholly and really; and do you already feel, in your own heart, a kinship to this great Kinsman, a trust in this great Vindicator, a reliance upon his great redemption? Another man's redemption is of no value to my soul; the sweetness lies in the little word "*my*"—"*my* Redeemer." Luther used to say that the marrow of the gospel is found in the pronouns, and I believe it is: "*my* Redeemer." Say, with me, each one of you for himself or herself,—

"*My* faith would lay her hand
On that dear head of thine,
While like a penitent I stand,
And there confess *my* sin.

"*My* soul looks back to see
The burdens thou didst bear,
When hanging on the cursed tree,
And hopes *her* guilt was there."

If you really do rely upon Christ's atoning sacrifice, and so take him as your Redeemer, you may not only hope your guilt was there, but you may know that it was. There, poor man, you may not have a penny in your pocket, but if you can truly say, "my Redeemer," you are infinitely better off than a millionaire who cannot say that. Thou, who knowest not where thou wilt have a lodging to-night, if thou canst truly say, "my Redeemer," thou needest not envy the very angels of God, for, in this respect, thou art ahead even of them, for they can call him "Lord", but not "Redeemer." He is not so near akin to them as he is to thee, "for verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham." He took your nature and mine, beloved, for Christ became a man.

So Job had something real and valuable left even when he had lost all his property.

III. Thirdly, Job seems to lay stress upon the word "liveth": "I know that my Redeemer *liveth*." This teaches us that JOB HAD A LIVING KINSMAN AMID A DYING FAMILY.

All his children were dead. We cannot easily estimate the full force of that blow upon the patriarch's heart. The loss of one child is a very painful event, even when the child is a very little one, and the parents have many others left; but it is a far worse bereavement when the children, who are taken away, are grown up, as Job's were. They were evidently a very united family, who used to meet in each other's houses for mutual fellowship. They seem to have been a very happy family, and they were certainly a family under very gracious influences, for Job was accustomed, after their days of festival, to offer sacrifices for them, lest they should have sinned against the Lord. Altogether, it was a fine family,—seven sons and three daughters;—and now they were all gone at once! To lose all one's family at once, like that, is a heavy stroke that none can measure but those who have felt it. All were gone,—the whole ten at once! That was sad for poor Job, but it was most blessed that he was able to say, "Though my children are all dead, 'I know that my Redeemer liveth.' He is not dead, and in him I find more than all that I have lost."

Look at your Lord, dear friend, if you are mourning, just now, the loss of loved ones, and see whether he is not better to you than ten sons and daughters. See whether there is not, in his heart, room enough for that affection, which has been so rudely snapped, to grow again. The tendrils of your soul want something to cling to, and to twist around; then let them twine around him. Rejoice that he lives in a dying world. If you walk through the cemetery, or stand by the open grave, how blessedly these words seem to fall upon your spirit, like the music of angels, "These are dead, but 'I know that *my Redeemer liveth*,'—liveth on, liveth in power, liveth in happiness, liveth with a life which he communicates to all who trust him. He lives, and therefore I shall live with him. He lives, and therefore the dead, who are in him, shall live for ever." O blessed truth!

You will yourself die soon, dear friend; no, I must correct myself,

you will not *die*, for it is not death for one who knows the Saviour to die. You will fall asleep in him, one of these days, at the very hour that God has appointed; and when you open your eyes, it will not be in the narrow death-chamber, you will not be on the bed of sickness. Methinks you will be startled to find yourself amid such new surroundings. "What is this I hear?" you will say. "Such music as this has never charmed me before, and what is that I see?" But you will not need to enquire, for you will know *that* face at once. You knew, while on earth, that Jesus still lived; but you will know it better then, when you lay aside these heavy optics that do but dim our sight, and get into the pure spirit state, and then see HIM. Oh, the bliss of that first sight of Christ! It seems to me as if that would gather up an eternity of delight into a single moment; that first glimpse of him will be enough to make us swoon away with excessive rapture. I do verily think that some saints, whom I have known, have done just that,—swooned away with the excess of joy that they have felt in their departing moments. I have, sounding in my ears just now, the voice of a dear brother, by whose bedside I sat for a little while before I came to this service. He said to me, "I shall be home to-night, pastor. I wanted to see your face once more before I went; but I shall be home to-night, and see the face of Jesus." I hope you will all be prepared to die after that fashion. The godly old negro said, "Our minister is dying full of life." That is the way to die,—full of life. Because Jesus lives, we shall live also, and we may well die full of life because of our union to him.

IV. The last thought I want to leave with you is this,—JOB HAD ABSOLUTE CERTAINTY AMID UNCERTAIN AFFAIRS.

He said, "*I know* that my Redeemer liveth." Why, Job, I should have thought you would not have known anything for certain now. I should not have liked to insure Job's sheep, and oxen, and asses, and camels, or the houses in which his children met together to feast. Nothing seemed to be certain with Job but uncertainty; yet there was one thing, concerning which he felt that he could put his foot down firmly, and say, "'*I know.*' The winds may rage, and the tempests roar, but they cannot shake this rock. 'I know.' 'I know.' 'I know.'" Beloved, is everything uncertain with you in this world? Of course it is, for it is so with everybody. But does it appear to be more uncertain with you than it does with anybody else? Does your business seem to be slipping away, and every earthly comfort be threatening to disappear? Even if it is so, there is, nevertheless, something that is certain, something that is stable,—Jesus your Redeemer lives. Rest on him, and you will never fail. Let your faith in him be firm, and confident; you cannot be too fully established in the belief that Jesus, who once died, has left the grave, to die no more, and that you, in him, must also live eternally. Something may be wrong with you, for the next few days or weeks, but all is right with you for ever, and "all's well that ends well." There may be some rough water to be crossed between here and the fair havens of eternal felicity, but all is right there for ever and ever. There may

be losses and crosses, there may be tossings and shipwrecks, but all is right for ever with all who are in Christ Jesus. "Some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship,"—but all who are in Christ Jesus shall escape "safe to land." There are uncertainties innumerable, but there is this one certainty: "Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation: ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end." Spring on this rock, man! If you are struggling in the sea, just now, and waves of sin and doubt beat over you, leap on to this rock,—Jesus lives. Trust the living Christ; and, because he lives, you shall live also. I could cheerfully take my place with Job, if I might be able to say as confidently as he did, "I know that my Redeemer liveth;" and if you, as a poor sinner, are trusting wholly and only in Christ, then he is your Redeemer, and you are saved for ever. If he is the only hope that you have, and you cling to him as the limpet clings to the rock, then all is right with you for ever, and you may know that he is your Redeemer as surely as Job knew that he was his. The Lord bless you, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

JOB XIX.

Verses 1, 2. *Then Job answered and said, How long will ye vex my soul, and break me in pieces with words?*

They struck at him with their hard words, as if they were breaking stones on the roadside. We ought to be very careful what we say to those who are suffering affliction and trial, for a word, though it seems to be a very little thing, will often cut far more deeply and wound far more terribly than a razor would. So Job says, "How long will ye vex my soul, and break me in pieces with words?"

3. *These ten times have ye reproached me: ye are not ashamed that ye make yourselves strange to me.*

He means that they had reproached him several times over, and hints that they ought to have been ashamed to act so strangely, so coldly, so untenderly, towards him.

4. *And be it indeed that I have erred, mine error remaineth with myself.*

"I have done you no harm. The error, if error there be, is within my own bosom, for you cannot find anything in my life to lay to my charge." Happy is the man who can say as much as that.

5, 6. *If indeed ye will magnify yourselves against me, and plead against me my reproach: know now that God hath overthrown me, and hath compassed me with his net.*

Job seems to say, "I did not bring this trouble upon myself; it is God who has laid it upon me. Take heed lest, in reproaching me because of my trouble, you should reproach God also." I suppose that we cannot, all of us, see into the inner meaning of these words; but if we are in very sore trouble, and those who ought to comfort us are bringing cruel accusations against us, we shall read the language of Job with no small sympathy and satisfaction.

7. *Behold, I cry out of wrong, but I am not heard: I cry aloud, but there is no judgment.*

Poor Job! When our prayer is not heard, or we think it is not, then

the clouds above us are dark indeed. You who are passing through a season of unanswered prayer, do not imagine that you are the first to traverse that dreary way! You can see the footprints of others on that desolate sandy shore. Job knew what that experience meant, so did David, and so did our blessed Lord. Read the 2nd verse of the 22nd Psalm, and hear Jesus say, "O my God, I cry in the day-time, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent."

8. *He hath fenced up my way that I cannot pass, and he hath set darkness in my paths.*

God had done this, and done it to Job, whom he called "a perfect and an upright man." Then, how can you and I expect to escape trial and difficulty when such a man as the patriarch of Uz found his road blocked up, and darkness all around him?

9, 10 *He hath stripped me of my glory, and taken the crown from my head. He hath destroyed me on every side, and I am gone: and mine hope hath he removed like a tree.*

That is, torn up by the roots, and carried down the stream, to be forgotten by the people who once knew it, and rejoiced in its welcome shade.

11. *He hath also kindled his wrath against me, and he counteth me unto him as one of his enemies.*

Does God ever act like that towards his own children? Yes; there are times when, without any anger in his heart, but with designs of love toward them, he treats his children, outwardly, as if he were an enemy to them. See the gardener going up to that beautiful tree. He takes out a sharp knife, feels its edge to be sure that it is keen, and then he begins pruning it here, gashing it there, and making it to bleed in another place, as if he were going to cut it all to pieces. Yet all that is not because he has any anger against the tree; but, on the contrary, because he greatly values it, and wishes it to bring forth more fruit than it has ever done. Do not think that God's sharpest knife means death to his loved ones; it means more life, and richer, fuller life.

12. *His troops come together, and raise up their way against me, and encamp round about my tabernacle.*

Troops of trouble, troops of Chaldeans and Sabeans, troops in which Job counted the stormy winds as terrible allies of the Most High;—all these had come up against Job, and he seemed to be like a country that is beaten down and devoured by powerful invaders.

13. *He hath put my brethren far from me, and mine acquaintance are verily estranged from me.*

He looks on those so-called "friends" of his; and, remembering the bitter things they had said, he tells them that they are estranged from him.

14, 15. *My kinsfolk have failed, and my familiar friends have forgotten me. They that dwell in mine house, and my maids, count me for a stranger: I am an alien in their sight.*

What a long way a child of God may be permitted to go in trouble! Ah, brethren! we do not know how those, who are most dear to God's heart, may suffer all the more for that very reason: "for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth."

16, 17. *I called my servant, and he gave me no answer; I intreated him with my mouth. My breath is strange to my wife, though I intreated for the children's sake of mine own body.*

He mentioned to his wife those whom death had taken away, and asked her to speak kindly to him; but even she had hard words to throw in his teeth.

18—20. *Yea, young children despised me; I arose, and they spake against me. All my inward friends abhorred me: and they whom I loved are turned against me. My bone cleaveth to my skin and to my flesh, and I am escaped with the skin of my teeth.*

There is no skin upon the teeth, or scarcely any; and, therefore, Job means that there was next to nothing of him left, like the skin of his teeth.

21. *Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends; for the hand of God hath touched me.*

How pitiful it is that he has thus to beg for sympathy! This strong man— this most patient man—this perfect and upright man before God has to ask for sympathy. Do you wonder that it was so? HE, who was far greater than Job, ran back thrice to his sleeping disciples as if he needed some help from them; yet he found it not, for he had to say to them, "What, could ye not watch with me one hour?" Let this be a lesson to us to try and possess bowels of compassion towards those who are in sorrow and distress.

22. *Why do ye persecute me as God, and are not satisfied with my flesh?*

"If God smites me, why do you, who are round about me, do the same? Is it not enough that God seems to be turned against me? Why should you also be my enemies?"

23, 24. *Oh that my words were now written! oh that they were printed in a book! that they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever!*

Inscriptions have been found, graven in the rocks, that may have been done in the time of Job; and it was common, in ancient days, to write on tablets of lead or brass; so Job desired that what he was saying might be recorded for future reference, for he was persuaded that he was being hardly dealt with, and unjustly judged.

25. *For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth:*

"For I know," What a splendid burst of confidence this is, right out of the depth of his sorrow, like some wondrous star that suddenly blazes upon the brow of the blackest night, or like the sudden rising of the morning sun!

26—28. *And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me. But ye should say, Why persecute we him, seeing the root of the matter is found in me?*

Job seems to say, speaking about himself, though in the third person, "He is a devout man, can you not see that? He has faith in God, my friends, can you not perceive that? Wherefore, then, do you persecute him so?"

29. *Be ye afraid of the sword: for wrath bringeth the punishments of the sword, that ye may know there is a judgment.*

Now Job carries the war into the enemy's camp; and he says, "You charge me with all sorts of sin, and yet you cannot deny that the root of the matter is in me. Would it not be much wiser for you to be yourselves afraid lest God should cut you off for falsely accusing me, and slandering me, in the time of my sorrow?" There we may confidently leave Job, for the man who can truly say what he has said about his Redeemer, will come out all right at the last.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—412, 326; AND FROM "SACRED SONGS AND SOLOS"—25.

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THE HARVEST AND THE VINTAGE.

A Sermon

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DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON.

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, September 17th, 1876.

"And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped. And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe. And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs."—Revelation xiv. 14—20.

I AM no prophet, nor the son of a prophet; neither do I profess to be able to explain all the prophecies in this blessed Book. I believe that many of them will only be explained as the events occur which they foretell. Yet there are some things which are plain even to the most superficial reader. It is plain, for instance, that it is certainly foretold that the power of antichrist shall be utterly and eternally destroyed, and that Babylon, that is to say, the Papal system, with all its abominations, shall be cast like a millstone into the flood, to rise no more for ever. It is also certain that the Jews, as a people, will yet own Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of David, as their King, and that they will return to their own land, "and they shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations." It is certain also that our Lord Jesus Christ will come again to this earth, and that he will reign amongst his ancients gloriously, and that there will be a thousand years of joy and peace such as were never known on this earth before. It is also certain that there will be a great and general judgment, when all nations shall be gathered before the Son of man sitting upon the throne of his glory; and his final award concerning those upon his left hand will be, "These shall

go away into everlasting punishment;" and concerning those upon his right hand, "but the righteous into life eternal."

How all these great events are to be chronologically arranged, I cannot tell. This I know,—for I have read a multitude of books upon this subject, and of making them there is practically no end,—all the authors seem to me to be wonderfully wise in confuting one another, but not to be so successful in establishing their own theories. Therefore am I content to believe what I see to be clearly taught in the Scriptures, and to leave to abler minds than my own the arrangement of the various events in some sort of historical sequence. This, however, seems to me to be clearly revealed in the Scriptures, that there is to come, somewhen,—we know not when,—a solemn winding up of all the events of this world's history. Whatever else may happen, or may not happen, the apostle Paul plainly declared that God "hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." Even though we cannot comprehend some things that are foretold by John, or Isaiah, or Daniel, or Ezekiel, we know that "it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment;" and that "we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." Judgment must certainly come, even to the house of God, for Peter says that there it shall begin; and if it shall begin there, "what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?"

That there will be a day of judgment, appears to be clear even to human reason; for, apart from revelation, or, perhaps, assisted by some dim relics of it, all nations—I think I may say all, for no exceptions are known to me,—have believed in a judgment. They have called it by different names, and they have described it in various ways, but they have all believed, more or less clearly, in a great throne of justice, before which wrongs will be rectified, sin will be punished, and righteousness will be rewarded. This has seemed so self-evident, even to the crudest thoughts of the lowest of mankind, that, in some shape or other, the most benighted nations have believed it; and it strikes one, at once, as being most reasonable, for, in this world, how often does infamy triumph! How often is oppression linked with power to destroy innocence and virtue! What are the groans, and sighs, and wailings that I hear, and what the tears that I see, but the outbursts of men who are being crushed beneath the awful burden of lifelong injustice? The best of men are, all too often, trodden down as the very mire of the street, while the worst are sitting proudly in the high places of the earth. If there be a God at all,—and we know that there is,—there must be a time and a way of rectifying all this in another state; and so there is, as David says, "Verily there is a reward for the righteous: verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth;" and, therefore, verily there must be a time of judgment for the ungodly, even common reason seems to teach us that.

Moreover, there is, within us all, a conscience, which Shakespeare says "does make cowards of us all;" and well I ween that it may do so, since we have all sinned and turned from the path of right. Let man do what he will with that conscience,—unless there be an extraordinary restraint put upon it,—it bears testimony to the great fact that the judgment is coming on apace. We have known men stifle or silence this voice till they have come to a sick-bed, or have been at sea in a storm; yet why have they been so alarmed at the approach of death? Death itself is not to be feared, but it is—

> "The dread of something after death,—
> The undiscover'd country, from whose bourn
> No traveller returns,"—

that makes a man cling even to an ignominious and shameful life rather than hurry himself, all unprepared, before the bar of God. Men who have, when in health, denied this, have, as they have lain dying, proved that they believed it by the cold clammy sweat that has stood upon their brow at the very thought of passing into the spirit world. They have known that there is a God,—a God who must do right,—and knowing that they have done wrong, they have been afraid to fall into the hands of the living God.

But we are not left to the faint taper of human reason, or to the flickering candle of conscience; we have the full sunlight of divine revelation. Our Lord Jesus Christ himself has told us, in divers ways, sometimes by parable, and sometimes by plain speech, that there is a day assuredly coming in which all mankind shall stand before his bar; and the apostle John, in the visions which we are about to consider, had a view, not exactly of the judgment itself, but of a parable or picture of that judgment. May the Holy Spirit help us to look into it with divinely-opened eyes, and may he graciously impress the truth concerning the judgment upon all our hearts!

Before we consider my main subject, let me call your attention to what John says about the coming of the Judge: "I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle."

Observe then, first, *the Judge's throne.* On that great judgment day, he will come sitting upon a cloud. What can this metaphor mean? Surely it must mean that his judgment-seat will be far more glorious than the thrones of mere mortal monarchs. They may sit upon thrones of ivory; they may exalt themselves upon thrones made of gold, and bedecked with myriads of gems shining like the eyes of the morning, or the stars of the midnight sky; but their thrones can never be compared in splendour with the judgment seat of Christ. A great white throne shall come sailing along the sky, and on it shall sit the King of kings, and Lord of lords, the Judge of all, who has the right to sit in judgment, whose decisions will be impartial and infallible, and whose sentences will assuredly be carried out. He asks not for any throne that this world

could supply; he borrows no leave to judge from Parliament, or Pope, or prince. He is Judge by divine right, as himself God, and as the Mediator, appointed by God to judge the quick and the dead.

His mysterious throne is also said to be "a white cloud." The word expresses, not so much the colour of whiteness, as the dazzling brilliancy of a white substance,—dazzling because of its perfect purity. A throne as of alabaster shall that white cloud be to him, —a throne as of transparent glass, pure as crystal,—a throne that shall be without spot or blemish,—a throne whose judgment no bribe can ever influence,—a throne concerning which it may be said that the Judge seated there ne'er fears the face of man or devil, nor will he ever do any man or devil an injustice, but will "lay judgment to the line, and righteousness to the plummet."

The Judge's throne, then, shall be unique for its splendour and unearthly purity; and he will be seated upon a cloud, which will be so elevated in the sky that all can see it. If Christ were to be seated upon a throne set up at Jerusalem or at Rome, only a part of the world's vast population would be able to behold him; but, on that tremendous day, there shall be an audience-chamber large enough to hold the quick and the dead of all climes and all times, and Christ shall be there, above them all, "and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him." So, on some calm summer evening, as the sun has been setting, have I seen a cloud, wafted by the wind in the very face of the sun, and the sun has shone upon it, lighting it up with such glory as heaven's pencil alone could give; and I have said to myself, "So shall it be in that day when the Son of man shall appear, seated upon a white cloud as his last throne of judgment."

Now turn your eye, for a little while, from the Judge's throne to *his person:* "upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man." And well may John say "like unto the Son of man," for it is none but he: "THE Son of man." Man has had many sons, but no other like this "Son of man." He is the truest man who ever lived,—the most manly of all men,—the only one in whom manhood has reached its perfection; and, in that day, every eye shall see that, though he is "very God of very God," yet is he also just as truly man. They shall behold the nail-prints in his hands and his feet, and the marks of the spear-thrust in his side, and they shall see that it is even he whom they called "the Nazarene", and whom wicked men nailed to the cross of Calvary. It is HE who shall come to judge the quick and the dead,—the gentle Jesus, "meek and lowly in heart" still, full of love, and abundant in mercy, for those attributes can never depart from our Lord Jesus Christ; yet they will be consistent with the sternest justice and the most unflinching administration of the law of God. It will go ill, in that day, with those who have despised the Lamb of Calvary, for they shall find that he is also "the Lion of the tribe of Judah." None are more terrible in justice than those who are tender in mercy. Bring to me the gentlest spirit that ever lived, and begin to tell the tale of the Bulgarian massacres, and I will warrant you that, in proportion

to the tenderness will be the indignation. They, who have no heart, cannot display real indignation; but where there beats a true heart of love, there must be righteous wrath against that which is unloving, holy anger against that which is unjust and true. So shall it be with him who will sit upon the white cloud. With a perfectly balanced mind, calm and absolutely impartial, gentle, yet terrible, he will sit upon that throne of spotless purity, "and every eye shall see him." My eyes shall see him, and your eyes shall see him, and the eyes of everyone who has been born of woman shall see him in that day.

We have glanced at the Judge's throne, and at his person; now let us note *his adornments*. John mentions that he saw "on his head a golden crown." That is to signify that he is a Sovereign; and, indeed, as I have already reminded you, he is King of kings, and Lord of lords, and he is to be the Judge of all by virtue of his divine authority and power. How different it will be to see him with a crown of gold upon his head from what it was to see him wearing that terrible crown of thorns which the cruel soldiers plaited, and thrust upon his brow! The word used here does not usually refer to the diadem of power, but to the crown won in conflict; and it is very remarkable that it should be said that, when Christ comes to judge the world, he will wear the garland of victory, the crown which he has won in the great battle which he has fought. How significant of his final triumph will that crown of gold be about those brows that were once covered with bloody sweat when he was fighting the battle for our salvation! As his saints catch a glimpse of that fillet of gold, they will remember his victorious words, "It it finished;" and the very sight of that golden crown will fill their hearts with ineffable joy and delight, for they will recollect that he triumphed on the cross for them, and that he has vanquished all their foes, and now he has come to claim them as the reward of his struggles, and the spoils of his victory.

Give one more look at the Judge upon his throne, and you will see that he carries "in his hand a sharp sickle" or reaping-hook. This is his sceptre, and it signifies that he has come to finish his last great work, which will be sharp, swift, and decisive. When he came to fight the battle of truth, "out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword;" but now it is hand-work rather than mouth-work with him. There will be no ministry of mercy now, no further proclamation of the gospel; but, with a sharp sickle, Christ will come to reap. The sowing time will be over, and the reaping time will have come. What a sight that will be! "For he will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth." On that last tremendous day, when the earth will be rocking and reeling to and fro in terror at his coming, there will be a fulfilment of that verse in the last chapter of this Book: "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be."

I. Now follow me while we look, first, at THE HARVEST, and may the Spirit of God render these great truths exceedingly impressive to us! The first thing to be done, at the coming of the Lord, is to gather to himself his own people,—the wheat which he himself sowed, the precious grain which he watered with his bitter tears and his bloody sweat: "Another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe."

Notice that *this reaping comes first*, and I think it comes *first in order of time*. If I read the Scriptures aright, there are to be two resurrections, and the first will be the resurrection of the righteous; for it is written, "But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power." Sometimes, in Scripture, the resurrection of the just and of the unjust is represented as taking place simultaneously; and, at other times, they are represented as having an interval of a thousand years between the two; yet a thousand years are but as one day to God, and it may be that the whole period is included in the day of judgment. Still, it strikes me that we have sufficient warrant from Scripture to say that, in the order of time, the harvest comes before the vintage, as Paul says, "The dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord." After that, I gather that he will come to judge and to condemn the wicked.

But, certainly, if not first in order of time, it is here put *first in order of importance*, for it is the ingathering of the wheat to which Christ specially looks forward; it is this on which his soul is set with ardent longing. Judgment is his strange work, his left-handed work; but "he delighteth in mercy," and he will put this work first when he comes to "judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth." He has such regard for his saints that "when he maketh inquisition for blood, he remembereth them." His eye is ever fixed upon them; and even on the day of judgment, the great event to Christ shall be the clearing of the righteous from every accusation that may be brought against them, the complete and final justification of as many as have believed in Jesus.

We can see, from reading this passage, that those to be left, after the righteous are gathered in, are very clearly indicated. In this world, in the present state, there is a mixture of good and bad. Here, the tares and the wheat grow close together in the same field; and, as a general rule, no man can tell the tares from the wheat. If any of us were to try to root up the tares, we should be almost sure to root up the wheat also. But, in that day, the righteous and the wicked will be easily distinguished from one another. Nobody ever mistook an ear of wheat for a cluster of grapes; and when Christ comes, the distinction between the righteous and the wicked will be as clearly manifest as between a field of wheat in the time of harvest and a vineyard when the

grapes are ripe. It is plainly declared that, in that day, God's wheat will be ripe for the heavenly garner: "Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe." When the Lord Jesus comes, every child of God will be found to be ripe for heaven. There is a great deal of greenness and sourness in us while we are in the blade and in the ear; but when we are dried,—as the word might be translated,—when the wheat has become mellowed by the ripening influences of autumn,—then shall we be as sweet, ripe corn for the Lord of the harvest to gather into his garner. Some of you do not feel very ripe at present; but you may rest assured that you will not be harvested until you are fully ripe. The Lord will not reap one ear of his corn green; and he has a secret way of preparing his people for heaven when he has prepared heaven for them. The righteous will be perfectly ripe in that day: "The time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe."

Notice, also, that they are all to be gathered in, and that this great task is to be accomplished by the crowned King himself. I want that fact to be specially noted by you, so let me again read the 16th verse: "And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped." With the golden crown upon his brow, he that is like unto the Son of man will stoop from his throne of cloud, and reap his saints,—gathering them all to his bosom at one glorious sweep of his strong right arm. It does not say that Christ will send an angel to do this reaping. His love to his chosen is so great that he will not entrust this task to any angel, but will do it all himself. He alone knows how much that ripe corn has cost him. Those precious souls were espoused unto him from eternity, and they were redeemed by him with his own heart's blood. They are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones; so he gathers them unto himself, and does not think it is beneath his dignity himself to be the reaper of this golden grain. Do you not delight in that thought,—you who love the Lord? Does not your heart rejoice in knowing that, in that great day when you stand like ripe corn, Christ shall come, sitting upon a white cloud, and having on his head a golden crown, and, with the sharp sickle in his hand, he will gather you unto himself with the glad joy of the reaper? It is another metaphor that we find in the Book of Malachi, but it has the same meaning: "They shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels." None can tell, not even those who have had the greatest sympathy with Christ in the sowing, what will be his joy in the reaping; and what shall be our joy, too, when we enter into the joy of our glorified Lord. The harvest, even on earth, is a happy time; hear how the reapers sing and shout as they carry the golden sheaves into the garner; but what rejoicing and what shouting there will be when we, as shocks of corn fully ripe, are taken home to the heavenly garner! Well did we sing, just now, in anticipation of that last harvest home,—

"Hallelujah!
Welcome, welcome, Son of God!"

May you and I, dear friends, all be garnered amongst the wheat in that great harvest day!

II. Now, for a little while, we must have the very heavy task of looking at THE VINTAGE.

The vintage represents the destruction of the wicked: "And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle." You see, it is not the crowned Christ who comes to do this work of judgment, but an angel. "And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe." I want to speak to you very calmly, yet very solemnly, about this last vintage, because it may concern some of you. If you do not escape from the wrath to come, it *must* concern you,—awfully and terribly concern you.

Notice, first, that *this vintage comes after the harvest.* As I have told you, I think it will be so in the order of time. After Christ shall have gathered his saints unto himself, then shall he summon the wicked to appear before his judgment seat. Then shall follow their terrible condemnation; and even if it is not second in the order of time, it will be second in the order of importance. Dreadful as is their doom, our Lord Jesus Christ does not look upon that as the principal event of that last great day. His own words are, "The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." As I said before, the wicked will be clearly distinguished from the righteous in that day. Nobody will mistake them then. They may be mistaken here, for they may go to the same place of worship, they may sing the same hymns, and in many respects they may be like the children of God. We may easily mistake tares—such tares as Christ mentioned, —for blades of wheat; but again I remark that there is no possibility of mistaking a cluster of grapes for an ear of corn. So, in that day, there will be no way of evading the Judge's infallible judgment; there will be no miscarriage of justice before the bar of God.

Observe, next, that *the condemnation of the ungodly is called for by the angel of fire:* "another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire." Ah, me! what meaneth this? Hath God appointed some holy spirits to watch over the instruments of terror with which he will execute the fierceness of his wrath? Was that the angel, "which had power over fire," who launched the thunderbolts in Egypt on that dread night when the firstborn in all the land were slain unless they were sheltered under the sprinkled blood? Was that the angel, "which had power over fire," who smote the hosts of Sennacherib? Was that the angel, "which had power over fire," who opened the furnaces of hell, and caused fire and brimstone to descend on guilty Sodom and Gomorrah? It may be so, and that this same angel shall come forward, at the last, to demand

that justice shall be executed upon those who have despised God, and rejected Jesus Christ whom he hath sent.

It appears also, from the parable, that *the wicked will be fully ripe for punishment.* That is a very strong expression in the 18th verse: "Gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; *for her grapes are fully ripe.*" The righteous are said to be ripe; some of them, perhaps, only just ripe; but the wicked are fully ripe, for sin has a wonderfully ripening effect upon men. They add iniquity unto iniquity until they have filled up the measure of it. The Greek word, used here, means that they have reached their *acme*,—they have come to the highest point of sin. Are any of you here fully ripe? Why, methinks that one sin makes a man ripe for judgment; but to go on, year after year, despising Christ, and rejecting his gospel, must make man what we call "dead ripe." When a man goes on to profanity, and blasphemy, and infidelity, surely he must be "fully ripe." So will all be in that great day of the gathering of the vintage of woe; and, just as the clusters of the vine cannot resist the force of the hand that plucks them, or the sharp knife that cuts them off, so shall the wicked, in that day, be utterly defenceless, hopeless, and helpless; and he, that reaps them with his sharp sickle, shall find no difficulty in cutting them all off. Again I remind you that it will not be Christ who will do this work; an angel will do it, not the crowned King seated on the white cloud. They would not have anything to do with him, so he will have nothing to do with them, except to deliver them over to the angel that hath power over fire, and his brother-executioner. What a terrible sight that judgment will be! As John looked upon it in his vision, I feel sure that his very bones must have trembled, and the marrow in them must have melted, as he saw that angel, with his sharp sickle, quickly reap all the clusters of the vine of the earth, and cast them into the great winepress of the wrath of God. O sinner, this is but a faint picture of the doom of the lost, yet the picture itself is too terrible for me to try to describe or explain it! What will happen, in that great day, when you shall be reaped, and cast into the great winepress of the wrath of God;—or, as it may be read, "the great winepress of an angry God"? Ask thyself, my hearer, this solemn question, "Shall *I* ever be cast into that great winepress?" If thou dost continue to reject the mercy of Christ, what else can happen to thee?

Note, further, that *this winepress is "without the city";*—not in the New Jerusalem,—not in heaven,—but "without the city." That reminds us of another winepress, or olivepress, which was "without the city," and which was called Gethsemane, where he, who shall, by-and-by, be seated on the white cloud, himself suffered even unto agony and bloody sweat. These people would not plead his sufferings on their own account; they would not have him to reign over them, and therefore they must go into the great winepress of the angry God. Perhaps, in that dread day, if any of you are there,—which may God in mercy prevent!—you will remember that wondrous passage, in the prophecy of Isaiah, in which Christ says, "I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me;" and, as you would not have the salvation which he

wrought out in that winepress, you must be cast into the great winepress of the wrath of God.

"And the winepress was trodden without the city." This represents the awful suffering of lost souls, the eternal punishment that will then begin. And, as the red juice spurts from the trodden grapes, so did John, in his terrible vision, see the blood of men come flowing forth, "even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs." That metaphor and measurement are meant to show how terrible is the wrath of God against the ungodly. Perhaps someone here says, "That is too terrible a theme to talk about." Then, what must it be to endure it? Somebody will cavil at my words upon this awful topic. Nay, sir, cavil at the Scriptures, not at me. I do not explain the idea, but I tell you what John saw in vision. "It was only a vision," says someone. I know it was, but the reality will be far more terrible. There can be no possible exaggeration of the wrath of God. I beseech you, my dear hearers,—though I know not, and never wish to know, much about this dreadful subject,—remember that what we do know about the doom of the lost is enough to make one's hair stand on end, and one's heart almost to cease to beat; so, I beseech you, do not risk that doom for yourselves. Escape for your lives; look not behind you; but fly to the one refuge which God has provided. Whosoever will entrust his soul to Jesus Christ shall be eternally saved. Look unto him who wore the thorn-crown, and repose your soul's entire confidence in him, and then, in that last great day, you shall see him seated on the white cloud, wearing the golden crown, and you shall be gathered, with the wheat, into his garner. But if you reject him, do not think it wrong that you should be cast with the grapes into the winepress of the wrath of God, and be trodden with the rest of "the clusters of the vine of the earth." I beg you to take Christ as your Saviour, this very hour; lest this night you should die unsaved. Lay hold of Jesus, lest you never hear another gospel invitation or warning. If I have seemed to speak terribly, God knoweth that I have done it out of love to your souls; and, believe me, that I do not speak as strongly as the truth might well permit me to do, for there is something far more terrible about the doom of the lost than language can ever express or thought conceive. God save all of you from ever suffering that doom, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

REVELATION XIV.

Verse 1. *And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads.*

The great question for us is,—shall we be among the number? If we have the Father's name engraved upon our hearts, we may conclude that we shall, one day, have it written in our foreheads, and that we shall be amongst that chosen company.

2, 3. *And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps: and they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth.*

Notice how loud their singing was,—it was like many waters and great thunder. But notice, also, the sweetness of it, for it was melodious as the music of well-skilled harpers harping with their harps. Note, too, the freshness, the vivacity of it: "they sang as it were a new song." Shall we be there to sing that new song? If so, we must be "redeemed from the earth," not with a general, but with a particular redemption, which lifts us up from the rest of our fellow-creatures; and we must also have attended the sacred rehearsals, for none can sing in heaven but those who have learnt the song; and none can learn it but those who are "redeemed from the earth."

4, 5. *These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.*

Now we have another vision.

6, 7. *And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.*

This vision represents the spread of the gospel. It is generally referred to the Reformation period, when, on a sudden, the truth, which had so long lain hidden in old musty tomes, was proclaimed in every market-place. Beneath many a "gospel oak" the good news was told out,—the good news concerning Christ,—as if an angel were flying through the midst of heaven. This preaching of the truth led to the commencement of the downfall of Rome, which is here called Babylon, and which is ultimately to fall to utter and everlasting ruin.

8. *And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.*

That is, spiritual fornication, as we understand it in the Old Testament,—man's idolatry,—the setting up of visible objects of worship, instead of the invisible God. And what is there, in all the world, that is so idolatrous as the so-called "religion" of Rome? She multiplieth her idol gods to great excess,—her crosses and her crucifixes, her saints and her saintesses, her "sacraments" and her relics, her "old cast clouts" and her "old rotten rags." The Papacy is the most paganish of all the paganisms that have ever existed on the face of the earth; but it is to come to an end, for the mouth of the Lord hath said so.

9, 10. *And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb:*

How clear, therefore, we ought to keep of this idolatrous system! For even if we have not the mark of the beast in our foreheads by an open profession of loyalty to it, yet if we have the mark in our hands by being the partakers of Rome's sins, we shall also be partakers of her plagues concerning Romanism in all its forms. The great message to be proclaimed to-day is,

"Come out of her, my people;—come away from her, as far as the poles are asunder; —that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues."

11, 12. *And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name. Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.*

Truly, Rome has tried "the patience of the saints." What country is there in Europe which has not been dyed crimson with the blood of the martyrs? The rack, the stake, the block, the dungeon, the fires, all sorts of cruelties have been practised upon those who "keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." Let the valleys of Piedmont speak; do they not cry aloud to our God for vengeance? Let the St. Bartholomew massacre bear witness before the living God. Let the stakes of Smithfield say, "Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus."

13. *And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.*

It matters not where they die, or under what ignominy they die;—whether branded with the name of heretic, or cast out as the offscouring of all things, yet blessed are they, and their works follow them to heaven to bear witness to their faith; and they, spiritually, continue to live on earth to propagate the gracious seed for which they laid down their lives.

14—18. *And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped. And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe.*

After the glad harvest comes the sad vintage. After the ingathering of the righteous, there will be the ingathering of the wicked.

19, 20. *And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs.*

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—364, 345, 363.

Messrs. Passmore and Alabaster have just published, price one penny each, *Spurgeon's Illustrated Almanack for* 1905 and *John Ploughman's Almanack for* 1905. Pastor Thos. Spurgeon has selected the Texts for the Book Almanack, in which more than half the illustrated articles still bear the familiar initials, C. H. S. The proverbs on the Sheet Almanack have been pronounced, by competent judges who have read them, fully equal to those of former years, while the pictures are as striking as usual, and two of the articles are "John Ploughman's" own. Both Almanacks can be procured through the colporteurs, or from all booksellers, or direct from the publishers, who will be pleased to supply terms for large quantities for distribution. Address, Messrs. Passmore and Alabaster, 4, Paternoster Buildings, E.C.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

"CASES OF CONSCIENCE."

A Sermon

PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 24TH, 1904,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On a Lord's-day Evening, early in the year 1862.

"For mine iniquities are gone over mine head: as a heavy burden they are too heavy for me."—Psalm xxxviii. 4.

I HAVE a special purpose before me this evening. I shall endeavour to describe the state of the sinner's heart when it has been awakened, when conscience is set at work, when sin and the judgment of God upon it occupy the mind's attention,—that period which John Bunyan describes, in his "Pilgrim's Progress", as being spent between the City of Destruction and the Wicket Gate,—that state of mind in which a man is found when he flees from his former sin, and desires to escape from the wrath to come, but has not yet found out the way of salvation so as to realize his own pardon and forgiveness through the great atonement made upon the cross.

In fulfilling this intention, I propose, first, *to speak of those terrors which frequently accompany conviction of sin;* secondly, *to describe the cases of some who, while really convicted of sin, are, nevertheless, strangers to those terrors;* and then *to address a few words of advice, both to those who are sorely broken by cruel fears, and those, on the other hand, who are more gently brought to Christ.*

I. There is A GREAT AND APPALLING TERROR OF MIND WHICH FREQUENTLY ACCOMPANIES CONVICTION OF SIN. The experience, which I shall try to describe, has not been that of all those who are brought to Christ. I must make, as it were, a broad outline,—an open sketch, without filling it up,—a picture in which many, though certainly not all, may be able to read the story of their own passage through the Slough of Despond.

Usually, when grace comes into the heart, one of the first things that attends it is *a sort of undefinable fear.* The man does not know how or why it is that he has such a fear; he felt safe enough before, but now the very ground under his feet seems to be rotten. He played with sin, thinking it was only a trifle; but, suddenly, he is made to tremble at it. He finds that the serpent has a sting, and

he is afraid of it. Sometimes, by night, he will be scared with visions in his dreams; and, by day, something more vivid than visions will appear before him. He now begins to believe that there is a hell, that there is a just God, that sin must be punished, that he has sinned, and that, therefore, he must die. He does not know what he is to do; but he feels that something must be done, either by himself or by somebody else, for his soul is sore afraid. To a greater or less extent, he has first this fear of punishment, which afterwards, through the grace of God, grows into a fear of sin.

Then, as this fear increases, *a kind of disquietude and unrest* lays hold of the man. David tells us his own experience and his prayer when he was in such a state as I am trying to describe: "O Lord, rebuke me not in thy wrath: neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure. For thine arrows stick fast in me, and thy hand presseth me sore. There is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger; neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin." That is the case with a man under conviction of sin; he is restless and ill at ease. Those things, which he once counted as pleasures, now seem to him to be exceedingly wearisome. If he still seeks the amusements which once charmed him, they only sicken him now, he cannot bear to look at them. He has such a sad heart within him that he does not want to have songs sung to him, for they seem to be out of place to such a man as he feels himself to be. The psalmist's words just describe him now: "Fools because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, are afflicted. Their soul abhorreth all manner of meat; and they draw near unto the gates of death." The companions of such a man cannot understand what is the matter with him; they think that he is suffering from a fit of melancholy. So, indeed, he is; but I pray that it may not be a mere fitful spasm, but that it may continue upon him, and that it may be increased and intensified until he is "dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." The man's melancholy will then give place to "joy unspeakable and full of glory." He then begins to be a quiet stay-at-home. He tries to find rest there; but, somehow, even his own family does not afford him the peace it once did. His wife thinks that something strange has come over him; and if she is not herself converted, it must be quite incomprehensible to her. But if she should ever be led forth on the same pilgrimage, she would understand that this is a part of the footsteps of the flock,—one of the first of the footsteps of the straying sheep when the Shepherd comes to fetch them back.

This disquietude and unrest of spirit will grow, by-and-by, into *a burdensomeness of heart*, just as Bunyan describes Christian with a burden on his back, which made him sigh and groan. You remember how he pictures the pilgrim:—"I saw a man clothed with rags, standing in a certain place, with his face from his own house, a book in his hand, and a great burden upon his back. I looked, and saw him open the book, and read therein; and as he read, he wept and trembled; and not being able longer to contain, he brake out with a lamentable cry, saying, 'What shall I do?'" The man, of whom I am speaking, comes to just such a state as this. He has

no visible burden upon his shoulders, yet he has upon his heart a load so heavy that it threatens to crush him to the very dust, and to drive him to utter despair. It may be that, through the persuasion of his former companions, he is led to indulge in sin as he was wont to do; but if so, in the sin he is wretched, and after the sin he is far more miserable than he was before. He may sing; but, even while he is singing, he will be like the man, who could amuse others with his funny sayings, while his own heart was heavy within him. And this becomes the man's constant state of mind; not only can he find no rest, night nor day, but all the while he has to carry his heavy burden wherever he may be; and he cries to the Lord, with David, "Day and night thy hand was heavy upon me; my moisture is turned into the drought of summer."

This state of mind will continue, with some men, until they come, at last, to *utterly loathe themselves.* They might even adopt the language of David in the Psalm from which I have taken my text: "I am troubled; I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long. For my loins are filled with a loathsome disease; and there is no soundness in my flesh." There was one, who said that he wished he had been a frog or a toad,—anything rather than a man,—when he realized how sinful he had been; so detestable did he appear in his own sight for having sinned, and wantonly sinned, against such light, against such love, against such long-suffering,—for having rejected Christ, grieved the Holy Spirit, and despised the precious blood which alone can cleanse from sin. All these things come up before the man's mind, and he thinks that no doom is too bad for him. "No," saith he; "I once thought that it was an unjust thing for a man to be cast away to all eternity; but now I feel that, whatever thou doest with me, O God, it will be impossible for thee to be too severe! I deserve all that thine infinite justice can bring upon me. I would be quite willing to sign my own death-warrant, and to set my seal to my own condemnation, and say that it is just."

Loathing thus himself and his life, his sin and his pleasures, and loathing even his very existence, the man, if left to himself, will often undergo such terror of conscience that *even his body will begin to feel it.* His mortal frame, sympathizing with his immortal spirit, will grow sick. There have been some, with whom I have myself had to deal, who have had sore sickness through conviction of sin, and, for a little season, it did seem as if the only hope for them to be able to live at all was for them to find immediate pardon through the blood of Jesus Christ. There have been some, I doubt not, who have almost been bereft of their senses when they have seen sin in its true colours. Thank God, dear friends, if you have never come to this; and if you have, thank God for it. There are thousands, who have passed through that experience, and yet, through the thickest darkness, have come into the brightest light.

The man, who is the subject of this conviction, will also have *a perpetual consciousness of feebleness*, as David says, in the eighth verse of this Psalm, "I am feeble and sore broken." The strong man suddenly becomes weak as a little child; the very wise man,

the keen critic, the severe judge of others, suddenly becomes gentle, tender-hearted, soft in spirit. He does not now sit in judgment upon any other man, for he has enough to do in standing before the bar of his own conscience, and he dreads lest he should soon be judged and condemned by his God. He used to talk, in days gone by, a great deal about the dignity and might of man; but, now, he knows more about human depravity and weakness. At one time, he used to say, "I can believe in Christ whenever I like; I can be saved whenever I please;" salvation seemed to him a very easy matter in those days; but, now, it seems to him to be the hardest thing in the world to believe in Christ. His cry now is,—

> "But oh! for this no strength have I,
> My strength is at thy feet to lie."

He does not find fault with sermons as he used to do; if they do but reach his heart, and bring to him ever so little comfort, he is pleased and thankful. He is glad enough now to eat his meat off the poorest platter if he can but get food for his soul. He feels that, if the Lord would but send him his pardon, even if it came by a limping messenger, he would not trouble about the messenger, but he would prize the pardon that he brought. He is brought very low; the high-soaring spirit lieth in the dust, and out of the dust crieth, "Lord, save me, or I perish."

Beside and beyond all this, his soul getteth to be in *a terrible agony of desire.* It has come to this with him,—that he must have mercy, that he must be saved. He feels as if he could not take a denial,—that it were better for him to die than to continue to live in such a state as that in which he finds himself. He can use the words of our hymn,—

> "Wealth and honour I disdain,
> Earthly comforts all are vain;
> These can never satisfy,
> Give me Christ, or else I die."

He has the same sort of look that you may have seen on the faces of starving people when, at last, a loaf is set before them. It is bread they want,—bread! So this spiritually starving man feels that he must have provision for his soul, or he will expire. There is something terribly startling in the cry of "Fire!" at dead of night; but the cry of "Bread! Bread!" seems to come from the very vitals of humanity, and to reach the very centre of our hearts. So will it be with this man's prayer at last. It is not a matter of "may be" with him; he cannot bear to look upon salvation in the light of a perhaps or a peradventure; he feels that he *must* have it, that he cannot take a denial. He agonizes, and groans, and cries to God, "Lord, save me! Lord, save me! God be merciful to me a sinner!"

We have known some who have gone even further than this until, at last, *their prayer has been mingled with despair rather than with faith.* They have prayed to God for deliverance; they have, in some sense, looked to Christ upon the cross; yet they have not

seemed able to believe that there could be power in him to save them. Some of us have known what it was to have the great Judge of all put on the black cap, and pronounce sentence of death upon us. We have gone into the condemned cell, and waited there, really expecting to be led out to execution, and to hear the Lord say to us, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." I cannot tell you what is the intense delight of a heart, that has been prostrate in the dust, when it receives full remission, free forgiveness. It mounts as high now as it was wont to descend into the depths.

I will mention only one more characteristic of this man under conviction of sin, *he probably feels himself a solitary person.* David says, in this Psalm, "My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my sore; and my kinsmen stand afar off." The man under conviction of sin feels that he is quite alone, that he has no one in the world to help him. I have frequently noticed that young people, in this condition, have been afraid to mention to their own parents, or to their minister, what they feel. If we try to probe them a little, to find out what is the matter, they are very loth to tell us, because it seems to them that they are the only persons who ever felt as they do. I believe that almost all those, who come to Christ, think that they are very singular people,—very odd people. I know I thought that there never could be any other sinner so bad as I was, and that none could ever have felt the horror of great darkness that I felt. Little did I think that the path I was then treading, instead of being trodden by one solitary pilgrim, is the beaten track of hundreds of thousands of pilgrims.

II. Now, secondly, I shall endeavour to show you that IT SHOULD NOT BE A CAUSE OF DISQUIET TO ANY OF YOU IF YOU HAVE NOT BEEN SPIRITUALLY EXERCISED TO THE SAME EXTENT AS OTHERS.

Dear friends, all the distress, that is felt by the mind when under conviction of sin, is not the work of the Spirit of God, though some of it is. I cannot draw the line, and say exactly how far it is the Spirit's work; but, certainly, there is a portion of this horror and distress which does not come from God. Therefore, learn this lesson,—that it is not necessary for you to traverse the whole ground of every other sinner's experience in passing from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son.

No doubt, *part of the horror I have been describing comes from Satan.* He does not want to lose those who have been his subjects. He sees that one, who was once a very contented slave, begins to feel his chain irksome, and longs to escape from the cruel servitude; and, therefore, Satan brings out his great whip to frighten him, tells him that he must not attempt to escape, or he will flog him for his past sins. So the poor wretch crouches down at his feet, and Satan says, "Now is my only chance to prevent him from escaping. Servants of the infernal powers, attack him, vex him, torment him, insinuate every doubt, and every fear, and every blasphemy that you can. This is our only opportunity; he will be out of gunshot soon; it is now or never with us. Let us leave no stone unturned to break his heart, and ruin him, before he gets peace through

Christ." No doubt that evil spirit, who "worries whom he can't devour," has very often tried to trouble poor sinners because he knew that they were about to escape from his domain. It is not necessary, brethren, and it is not desirable, that you and I should know all this horror; that which comes from Satan, we should think ourselves happy to escape.

Another part of this agony, no doubt, *arises from ignorance.* If some of those poor weeping souls knew more, they would sorrow less, and suffer less. In John Bunyan's "Grace Abounding," you can trace very clearly that very much of the conflict that he had to endure was the result of his utter ignorance. He knew very little about spiritual things; at first, he had but one book, "The Poor Man's Pathway to Heaven." He does not appear to have attended much on the ministry in his early days, so he had not learned much about the kingdom of heaven, and he was in a state of great darkness when he found his way to Christ. But I do not think that you and I, beloved, who have been from our youth up instructed in the things of God,—if we know the plan of salvation, if we know that simple faith in the precious blood will save us,—should desire to pass through these extraordinary agonies and rackings of conscience and heart.

Besides, a part of this experience may also come *from constitutional tendencies.* There are some, who seem to have been born on the darkest nights of the whole year; and, on every possible occasion, they look rather at the spots on the sun than at the sun itself. Their observations are rather directed to the whirlpools and the barren deserts than to the gently-flowing rivers and green pastures. They have a very keen apprehension of the snakes and other reptiles, but not of the flowers and the birds. They were born in gloom, and they seem to carry the gloom of their nativity to their graves; and it seems very natural, and very likely,—since the Spirit of God does not change our physical constitutions, though he does change our moral nature,—that there should be in such people, coupled with that conviction which is the work of the Spirit, a tendency to certain fears and tremblings, which spring only from the flesh, and are not the work of the Spirit of God.

These few remarks may help to put some here, who have been wanting to experience these terrors, upon the right track; and they will not, I hope, pray for such a thing any more. Am I addressing any, who think they are not saved because they have not known such terrors as some others have experienced? Let me remind you, dear friends, that there are many of the true children of God who have never known these horrors. I suppose there are many, in this church, over which I am overseer, who have not known these terrors experimentally. They know what repentance of sin is, but the horror of great darkness they have not known. Certainly, in Scripture, we have not many of such cases recorded. I do not think that Lydia, whose heart the Lord opened, ever went through such an experience as David did in this matter. It may be that the apostle Paul did, for he had scales upon his eyes, and it may be that the blindness of his body was but a picture of the darkness of

his mind. But I do not think that Peter, and James, and John, and those other disciples whom Christ called while they were fishing, or engaged in other occupations, knew much about this kind of experience. They knew what repentance of sin was,—mark that; and that is the Spirit's work beyond any doubt; but they do not appear to have known that terror which springs from the flesh, or rises from the pit of hell.

Therefore, dear brothers and sisters, since many of the children of God have not felt these horrors, do not look upon those, who have felt them, as models for your imitation; and do not condemn yourself because you have not gone through an experience similar to theirs. While it is quite certain that some good people have known these terrors, you must remember that there may have been special reasons, in their case, why it was so with them. What a blessing it has been to others that John Bunyan, who seems to be my chief illustration to-night, passed through such an experience; for, if he had not done so, he could not have written his "Grace Abounding" and "Pilgrim's Progress." But you and I do not expect to write a "Pilgrim's Progress." We have not that special work to do; but Bunyan had; and, therefore, we do not need the peculiar training through which he had to pass. Certain metals, that will have to endure an extraordinary strain, have to pass through an annealing process; but other substances, which are not put to so severe a test, need not be prepared in the same stern fashion. The apostle Paul traces many of his deep troubles and holy triumphs to the qualifications with which he was fitted for ministering to the saints: "Whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation." Beyond a doubt, there are some servants of God, who have a great work to do in deep waters. In the course of their lifetime, they are to contend with Satan in a very special fashion, so the Lord gives them a special training, that they may become good soldiers of Jesus Christ from the very commencement of their career. None of you may have to do the work of Luther or Calvin; you will not all have to go forth to address multitudes, as Whitefield did; and you do not, therefore, need the peculiar training which was necessary for them.

But I again remind you that you must have that which is the work of the Spirit; repentance and abhorrence of sin, you must have; but that which is beyond this, which God employs as a disciplinary training for some of his servants, it is not necessary for all of you to have. If you had felt such horrors as others have experienced, you might not have been in your right senses now. The Lord, who tempers the wind to the shorn sheep, has tempered the Spirit's convictions to you. Possibly, you are of a feeble constitution, and you could not safely pass through what some strong men have endured. Your spirit may be so tender, your mind may be so susceptible, that it would have been broken if it had been subjected to the rough handling that others have had. You know that a physician, when he seeks

to cure a number of patients, treats them in various ways. He gives a good dose of physic to a strong soldier, and lets it work its way; but if he has to deal with a feeble girl, he gives her only a small dose, lest the larger quantity should kill her. So our Lord, when he is curing us of the evil disease of sin, acts differently in different cases; and, with some of us, he works very gently.

It is not necessary for me to say any more upon this point, except to remind you that *these horrors and terrors are not essential to salvation, or else they would have been commanded.* Faith and repentance, the essentials to salvation, are commanded: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." The things that are essential to salvation are put very plainly in the Scriptures. I do not read anywhere in the Word of God, "Be tempted of the devil, and you shall be saved." I do not read, "Feel a horror of great darkness, and you shall be saved." I do not find the Lord commanding you to despair, in order that you may be saved. So far from these things being essential to salvation, they are often stumblingblocks in the way of sinners seeking the Saviour, and devices of the devil from which may God deliver us! To doubt, for instance, whether Christ can save me, is a heinous sin. To think that my case is so bad that God cannot blot out my sin, is to doubt his omnipotence, and to do him grievous dishonour. For me to despair of receiving the mercy of Christ, is to do despite to that generous and self-sacrificing Saviour who bled to death on Calvary's cross. To think that he is either unable or unwilling to forgive us, is to add to our former offences; and that which is itself sinful cannot be a help to salvation. That which is, in itself, the very climax and culminating point of human guilt—to doubt the love, and kindness, and mercy of God,—cannot, in any sense, be a desirable thing in any child of God. To repent, is one thing; but to despair, is quite another matter. To dread sin, and to loathe it, is one thing; but to doubt the power of the blood of Christ to cleanse from all sin, is quite another.

III. Now, having handled these two points, let me close with WORDS OF ADVICE TO BOTH THESE CLASSES OF PERSONS WHOM I HAVE BEEN DESCRIBING.

Dear friends, ye who are frightened and alarmed, vexed and troubled, I know what you are saying, "Oh, that we could escape from this misery!" There is another friend, over yonder, who has never had these fears, and he is saying, "I wish I had them; for, if I had them, there would be some hope for me." If you do not have them, you want them; and if you do have them, you want to get rid of them; there is no pleasing you, either way. But good physicians do not seek to please their patients, but to cure them; it is not their aim to make the medicine palatable, but to make it efficacious. So, the Lord does not study our wishes, but gives us what is best for us, and we are very foolish to wish to have it otherwise.

Let me remind you, who are in terror because of sin, that the only way to escape from that terror aright is to flee at once to

Jesus. As a good old woman, who had long been accustomed to read "The Pilgrim's Progress," wisely said, "No doubt Mr. Bunyan described what he went through before he found Christ, but he did not picture the way of salvation as he might have done. Evangelist ought to have said to the pilgrim, 'Do you see that cross yonder, and do you see Jesus, the Son of God, made flesh, and bleeding and dying there? Look to him, and you shall be saved; trust him, and your sins shall be all put away at once.' That is the true gospel, which gives peace to troubled hearts." So I say to you, poor troubled friend, and to you who are not troubled, flee away to Christ. Trust the Son of God to save you, and he will save you. Trust him to put away all your past guilt, and he will do it. Trust him to keep you in the future, and he will vouchsafe you his promised aid. Trust him with the enormous load of your sin, and he will take it upon his shoulders, and roll it into the Red Sea of his atoning blood. Trust him with the foul disease of your evil habits, and with the touch of his healing finger you shall be made whole. Say not, "I am too miserable to rest on him," but rest on him, however miserable you may be. Say not, "I am not in a fit state to come to Christ;" for, whatever state you are in, you are fit to come to Christ. He needs no fitness in you, except that, just as you are, you trust in "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." May the Holy Spirit enable you to do so! I will not argue with you about your doubts and fears, your "ifs" and your "buts." This is God's commandment to you, poor sinner, "Trust in Christ." So, do not dare to disobey it; but may the Holy Spirit constrain you to obey it, for then shall you go on your way rejoicing because your sins, which are many, are all forgiven you.

To you, who have not felt such terrors as I have been describing, what shall I say? Do not displease the Lord by seeking for them; do not begin fretting and complaining because you have not been tried as others have been. If a child cries because he has not been whipped, he ought to have full satisfaction. If a young man should go to a physician, and complain that he was afraid he would not continue to live because he had not had the measles, or whooping-cough, or scarlet fever, what would the physician say to him? The most likely reply would be, "Be thankful, sir, that you have not had those maladies." If you cry because you have not had to smart under the Lord's rod, it may be that you will have your desire granted to your cost! The Lord may say, "That sinner might have gone straight to the cross, but he would not; he wanted to go through the Slough of Despond, so he shall go through it; and he shall flounder about in it, with the frogs croaking in his ears, and the filth rolling into his mouth, for many a day, until he knows better than to dictate to his Heavenly Father." If you have not gone to Sinai with Mr. Worldly Wiseman, to hear its thunders, and to see its lightnings, be thankful that you have not. Flee from all these things to Christ, without asking him for a preparatory training in the terrors and horrors which some have had to experience. Trust in Christ, and you shall find salvation at once.

I was reading, the other day, the preface to the hymns of a very excellent writer. There is a passage, in the memoir, in which the author says that "he stuck by a feeling religion, and a feeling religion stuck by him." Well, dear friends, I am afraid that many of you find that "a feeling religion" does stick by you; but I believe that is one of the worst kinds of religion in the whole world. It is a believing religion that saves the soul; and those who are so dependent upon frames and feelings are in the seventh heaven of delight one day, and in the depths of despair the next. They go up and down so quickly because they are built upon the sandy shifting foundation of their own emotions. Be not so foolish, beloved; but build on what Christ did, on what Christ was, on what he is, and what he suffered. Building so, you shall find him "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever;" and your hope, and faith, and comfort shall abide with you, since they are founded upon the immovable Rock of Ages.

I have tried to preach the gospel simply to-night. Remember, souls, that the Word is not preached in vain. We are either "a savour of life unto life" or "of death unto death" to our hearers; which is it to you, dear friends? Is it a savour of death unto death to thee, O impenitent sinner? And is it to thee, O penitent soul, a savour of life unto life? By this test shalt thou tell which it is,—if thou now, from thy heart, trustest Christ, in obedience to the Lord's command, then hath the gospel saved thee, and thou mayest go in peace. "Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity." "Man, thy sins are forgiven thee." "Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house." Go thy way, for the Lord hath had mercy on thee; glorify him in the family, and tell to others, wherever thou canst, what great things the Lord hath done for thee.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

PSALM XXXVIII., AND ISAIAH LIII.

I am going to read two portions of Scripture. In the first,—the 38th Psalm,—we shall hear a suffering servant of Jehovah crying out to his God.

Psalm xxxviii. Verse 1. *O LORD, rebuke me not in thy wrath: neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure.*

"If thou dost rebuke me, do it gently, O my Lord! If thou dost chasten me, let not thy displeasure wax hot against thy servant."

2. *For thine arrows stick fast in me, and thy hand presseth me sore.*

God may aim his arrows even at his own children, and he may lay his hand very heavily upon those whom he deeply loves.

3. *There is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger; neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin.*

David was under the afflicting hand of God even with regard to his bodily disease. He could have borne the pain if it had been merely physical; but there was a sense of sin mixed with it which made it sting him in his very soul.

4, 5. *For mine iniquities are gone over mine head: as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me. My wounds stink and are corrupt because of my foolishness.*

David had some painful old sores; I mean, old sins; and they seem to have broken out again and again; and when he wrote this Psalm, he was groaning in his spirit at the remembrance of them. His faith was at a low ebb, and his feelings were of the most bitter and sorrowful kind.

6. *I am troubled; I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long.*

Yet he was a true child of God all the while, for this is, according to its title, "A Psalm of David," concerning whom the Lord said "I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will." God's flowers do not have sunlight twenty-four hours in the day. They have their night seasons, when it is not only dark, but it may also be heavy with the cold dew, or trying with a sharp frost.

7, 8. *For my loins are filled with a loathsome disease: and there is no soundness in my flesh. I am feeble and sore broken: I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart.*

That is an expressive word that David uses: "I have roared." He felt as if his prayers were more like the agonized cries of a wounded beast than the intelligent supplications of a human being,—least of all, of a man of God; and, sometimes, when the spirit is greatly bowed down, it cannot express itself in words, but has to be content with groans, and cries, and sobs, and tears.

9. *LORD, all my desire is before thee; and my groaning is not hid from thee.*

What a sweet, sweet truth that is! Happy is that man, who, in the time of deepest darkness, can still grasp that truth, and hold it fast. "Lord, my groaning is not hid from thee! I could only roar out my complaint, or groan it out; but thou couldst hear it just as well as if I had ordered my words aright before thee."

10, 11. *My heart panteth, my strength faileth me: as for the light of mine eyes, it also is gone from me. My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my sore; and my kinsmen stand afar off.*

"Relatives and friends alike all get away from me as far as they can, for they cannot bear to be in such sorrowful company."

12, 13. *They also that seek after my life lay snares for me: and they that seek my hurt speak mischievous things, and imagine deceits all the day long. But I, as a deaf man, heard not: and I was as a dumb man that openeth not his mouth.*

Although David was a tried man, he was, at least at that time, a wise man. God did not leave his servant to act or to speak foolishly; and, beloved, when men are unjustly rebuking and reproaching you, there is nothing more wise than to act as if you did not hear them. It is the very acme of wisdom if you can keep quite quiet, and not answer them,—refusing to make any apologies or extenuations,—or even showing any sign that you have so much as heard what they have said.

14, 15. *Thus I was as a man that heareth not, and in whose mouth are no reproofs. For in thee, O LORD, do I hope:—*

What sublime faith there is here! It is easy to have faith in sunshiny weather,—to have faith when you have the least need of it. There are plenty of people, who fancy they are believing in God when everything is going well with them. It is one thing to believe when you are lying at anchor in a peaceful harbour; it is quite another matter to believe when you are at sea in a storm. David hoped in God when trouble had come upon him wave upon wave: "For in thee, O Lord, do I hope:"—

15. *Thou wilt hear, O LORD my God.*

"Even if I do not hear thee, thou wilt hear me; and if no man shall hear me, thou wilt hear my prayer, and answer my supplication."

16—20. *For I said, Hear me, lest otherwise they should rejoice over me: when my foot slippeth, they magnify themselves against me. For I am ready to halt, and my sorrow is continually before me. For I will declare mine iniquity; I will be sorry for my sin. But mine enemies are lively, and they are strong: and they that hate me wrongfully are multiplied. They also that render evil for good are mine adversaries; because I follow the thing that good is.*

We need never be afraid of any man's opposition when the reason for his being our adversary is that we "follow the thing that good is," as our translators quaintly express it.

21, 22. *Forsake me not, O LORD: O my God, be not far from me. Make haste to help me, O Lord my salvation.*

Now we shall see, as we read that wondrous 53rd chapter of Isaiah, not a man of God in trouble, but the Son of God in trouble; and we shall see him also as a deaf man that heareth not, "and as a dumb man that openeth not his mouth."

Isaiah liii. Verses 1—9. *Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed? For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.*

Those wicked men were his enemies because he did "the thing that good is." They that rewarded him evil for good were his adversaries, even as they are ours.

10. *Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him;*

We might say the same of that tried child of God whose utterances we read just now: "It pleased the Lord to bruise him."

10, 11. *He hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.*

What gracious gospel words these are, even though they were recorded under the old dispensation! Oh, how you, who are full of iniquity, ought to catch at these inspired declarations, which so clearly set forth the substitutionary work of Christ on behalf of the guilty! If you realize your need of such a Saviour as he is, how these words ought to gladden your heart!

12. *Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.*

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

COMFORT FOR TRIED BELIEVERS.

A Sermon

PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 1ST, 1904,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Thursday Evening, September 21st, 1876.

"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."—1 Corinthians x. 13.

THIS verse immediately follows the warning to "him that thinketh he standeth" to "take heed lest he fall." We none of us know what stuff we are really made of until we are tried and tested. It is a very easy thing to imagine yourself to be strong, but it is a very different matter to find that you have sufficient strength when you actually need it. It has even been found possible, in these modern days, for some brethren and sisters to believe themselves to be perfect,—to believe that sin is entirely conquered within them; but I will warrant you that you will find that the practice of perfection is not nearly so common as the profession of it, and nothing like so easy. And I will venture to go even further, and to say that, if you watch those in whom sin is said to be dead, you will find that, if it is dead, it is not buried, and that it smells remarkably like other dead things, which ought to be buried. It is, possibly, worse than when it was alive, for it has become alive again, in an even worse sense, with a double putridity. Let no one of us imagine himself to be perfect, or to be proof against the temptations of Satan, or even the grosser vices to which the flesh is prone. It may only need for you to be attacked at a certain point, and in a certain way, and you will be overcome even as others have been. Thy wisest way is to believe thyself neither to be wise nor strong, and therefore to lie humbly at his feet who can make thee both wise and strong, and to look, away from thyself, up to him who will keep the feet of his saints. It ought to cool the hot blood of self-conceit, in any man, to remind him that, although he thinketh that he standeth, it is simply because he has not been tempted as others have been, who have fallen; or, if he has been tempted in a way

which overthrew them, while he has stood fast, yet, if the temptations were still further increased, and he were left to himself, he would find that, at the last, the fierce wind from the pit would sweep him off his feet even as it has swept off other men, who thought that *they* could never be moved.

After the apostle Paul had, by this warning, rebuked the boastings of those who thought they were standing securely, he thought of the far larger number of persons who never think that they can stand, but who are in constant terror lest they should fall. They say they are not the people of God; yet, in almost the next breath, they say they are afraid that they will lose what they just said they had not got! They sometimes hope that they are saved, yet they quickly doubt if it is so with them; and they are troubled with the fear that, even though they are saved, they may yet fall and perish. Their feelings are a strange mingle-mangle of incorrect caution and incorrect doubt; and Paul seems to me, in this verse, to give them a cordial by which their fainting spirits may be revived, and I would like to pass it on to any of you who also need it. You may be tried in two senses,—trial will come, and the trial will often be a temptation, while the temptation will always be a trial.

I. Now comes in the comfort, and the first comfort, even in great trouble, is, that WE HAVE NOT, AFTER ALL, BEEN TRIED IN ANY VERY UNUSUAL WAY: "There hath no temptation (or trial) taken you but such as is common to man."

You may think, my dear brethren and sisters, that you have been tried more than others; but it is only your want of knowledge of the trials of others which leads you to imagine that your own are unique. There are many others, besides yourself, in the furnace, and in quite as hot a part of it as that in which you are now placed. Note what Paul says: "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man." It is a human temptation, not a superhuman one, which has assailed you; that is to say, one which can be withstood by men,—not one that must inevitably sweep them away. You have never been tempted with an angelic temptation. Satan has tempted you, young man, but not with the same temptation with which he allured the angels who kept not their first estate. There may be other orders of intelligence, for whom there are other forms of temptation, because their intellects are superior to yours; but God has allowed you to be assailed in a way which is suitable as a test to you as a man. The trials, that have come upon you, have been moderated to your capacity as a man. The Lord knows that you are but animated dust, so he has not permitted you to be treated as if you were made of steel or iron. He has himself dealt with you as an earthen vessel,—a thing of clay in which he has caused life to dwell. He has not broken you with his rod of iron, as he would have done if he had smitten you with it.

"But I am very sorely tempted," saith one. Yes, perhaps you are; but the Lord has given you the history of the children of Israel in the wilderness, to let you see that you have not been tempted more than they were. "Ah!" says another, "but I find myself placed in a very peculiar position, where I am greatly tried. I have

to labour hard, and I have much difficulty in earning my daily bread, and I am beset with trials of many kinds." Well, dear friend, even though what you say is perfectly true, I am not certain that your position is any more likely to bring temptation than was that of the children of Israel in the wilderness. "Ah!" you say, "but they had not to work to earn their bread. The manna came to them every morning, and they had only to gather it, and to eat it. They were not engaged in commercial transactions, there were no markets in the desert,—no Corn Exchange, no Stock Exchange, no Smithfield, no Billingsgate,—no taking down the shutters in the morning, and putting them up again at night, and going a great part of the day without any customers. They were separated from all other nations, and were in a peculiarly advantageous position." Yet, dear friends, you need not wish to be placed in such a position, because, advantageous as it was, in some respects, the Israelites there were evidently tempted to all sorts of sins, and fell into them very grievously. Having often read the story of their forty years' sojourn in the wilderness, you know their sad history. With so favourable a position granted to them, under the Lord's own special guardianship, and enriched with many choice mercies, we might have expected that they would have been free from temptation;—or, at any rate, that they would not have fallen into its snare; yet it was not so, for the devil can tempt in the wilderness quite as well as in the city, as we know from the experience of Christ himself. The devil would tempt you even if your bread was given to you every morning, instead of your having to earn it; he would tempt you if you had no business to attend to, and never had to go into the world to meet with your fellow-men. In fact, the story of the Israelites teaches me that it is best for you to work, and best for you to be poor, and best for you not to make money as fast as you would like, and best for you to be surrounded by cares of various kinds. I think I judge rightly that the people of God, the saved ones, do not fall into such gross sins as the Israelites did in the wilderness; so that the saints' position, though it may appear worse than that of Israel, is really better.

To what, my dear brethren and sisters, are you tempted? *Are you tempted to lust after evil things?* They lusted after the meat that was not suitable to the climate, nor good for their health; and they despised the manna, which was the very best food they could have. Do you ever get a craving for what you ought not to desire? Are you growing covetous? Do you long for ease? Do you wish for wealth? Do you love pleasure? Well, dear friends, this temptation has happened to others before; it happened to those people in the wilderness. You are not the first to be tempted in that fashion; and if divine grace has helped others to overcome the covetous desire, and the lusting of the spirit, it can help you to do the same; but, mark also that, if others have fallen through such temptations, and perished in the wilderness, you, too, apart from divine grace, will do the same. Therefore have you urgent need to cry to the Strong for strength, lest you also should fall even as they did.

Are you tempted to idolatry? It is a very common temptation to make an idol of a child, or of some particular pursuit in which you are engaged; is there anything in the world that is so dear to you that the very thought of losing it makes you feel that you would rebel against God if he took it away from you? Remember what John was inspired to write: "Little children, keep yourselves from idols." But if you are tempted to idolatry, do not forget that this is a thing that is common to men. In the wilderness, the Israelites were tempted to set up a golden calf, and to worship it, and even to practise other idolatrous rites which were too foul for me to describe. They were tempted to idolatry, so it is not an uncommon temptation; and if you also are tempted in a similar fashion, you must cry to God for grace to resist and to overcome the temptation.

Are you tried, sometimes, even with that terrible temptation which is mentioned in the verse where Paul says, "*Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed*"? Has strong passion sometimes suggested to you that which your soul abhors? Have you been, at times, forced to the very brink of that dread abyss of uncleanness, till you have had to cry, with the psalmist, "My feet were almost gone; my steps had well-nigh slipped"? Ah! this temptation also is not uncommon to men; and even those who live nearest to God, and are the most pure in heart, sometimes have to blush before the Lord that such evil suggestions should ever come into their minds.

And have you, too, been *tempted* "*to tempt Christ*, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents"? They wanted God to change his plans and purposes concerning them; and they found fault with him, and said that he had brought them into the wilderness to destroy them. Do you feel that your present troubles are too severe,—that they should not have been sent to you,—at least, not so many and so heavy as they are? If so, and if you feel that you have a cause for complaint against the Most High, and that you want him to change his methods of dealing with you so as to suit your whims and fancies,—alas! sad as such a state of mind is, it is only too "common to man."

And, possibly, you may also have been *tempted to murmur*, "as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer." I must withdraw that word "possibly," for I am greatly afraid that many professing Christians do murmur, and that they do not always realize what a gross sin it is to murmur, seeing that it is an act of distinct rebellion against God. But, should you, at any time, feel a murmuring spirit rising up within your heart, you must not say, "This is a trial which nobody else has ever experienced." Alas! it is a very human temptation, which is exceedingly "common to man."

So, summing up all that I have been saying, and looking round upon this congregation, and upon all of you who know the Lord,—although it would be impossible for me to recount all the different forms of temptation and trial through which you have gone, yet this is a matter of fact,—"there hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man." We are all in the same boat, brothers and sisters, so far as temptation and trial are concerned. We are

all warring the same warfare; your duty may call you to one part of the field, and mine may call me to another part, but the bullets whiz by me as well as by you. There is no nook so quiet but it hath its own special dangers, and there is no Valley of Humiliation so lowly but it hath its peculiar temptations. Sins are everywhere; they sit down with you at your board, and they go with you to your bed. Snares are set for you in your home and in the street,—in your business and in your recreations. Snares are not absent from your pains, and they are abundant in your pleasures. Everywhere, and under all circumstances, must we expect to be tried; this experience is common to men. The remembrance that it is so ought to be somewhat of a comfort to us in every time of trial and temptation.

II. But, secondly, in our text we have a far better source of comfort than that; it is this: "but GOD IS FAITHFUL." "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able."

"God is faithful." Oh, how I love those words! They sound in my heart like heavenly music. "GOD is faithful." You are not faithful, my brother or sister; at least, I know I am not, in the full sense of the term, faithful,—full of faith, and faithful. "But"—oh, that blessed "*but*,"—"*but* GOD is faithful"! "If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful,"—always true to every promise he has made,—always gracious to every child whom he has adopted into his family,—"a very present help in trouble,"—preserving us from sinking in our seas of trouble, and delivering us from the trouble when it has accomplished the purpose for which it was sent.

"God is faithful,"—faithful to that first promise of his which came into thy soul when thou didst yield thyself to Jesus, and he whispered to thine heart, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Dost thou remember that promise, and has not the Lord been faithful to it? "God is faithful" also to that promise which he made of old concerning his Son, Jesus Christ: "He shall see his seed." He has seen his seed in thee, and he will see thee to be his seed for evermore.

"God is faithful" to all his promises; and in thy experience, my brother or sister, he has been faithful to the promises which met thy case in all thy changing circumstances. Has he not been faithful? Canst thou put thy finger upon a single page of thy diary, and say, "God was unfaithful then"? Thy friend, who ate bread with thee, has lifted up his heel against thee; but has thy God forsaken thee? Even thine own children have been unkind and ungrateful to thee; but has the Lord ever treated thee ill? Where thou hadst the most hope, among thine earthly friends and acquaintances, thou hast had the most disappointments; but has Jesus ever been a wilderness unto thee? "All men are liars," thou hast said, in the bitterness of thy spirit, when thou hast trusted in them, and they have failed thee in the time of trial; but hast thou ever found Christ false to his Word? Canst thou not join thy testimony with that of all the saints above, and the saints below, and say with Paul, "God is faithful"?

Even if any of you are looking forward to a dreaded sickness, or to a painful operation, or to business losses which may sink you from your present comfortable position to one of great trial and poverty,—think of this blessed truth, "God is faithful." The whole world may reel to and fro, like a drunken man; but the Rock of ages stands secure. The shooting stars of temporary prosperity may die out in everlasting night, but God is "the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." "God is faithful." Whatever thy future trials are to be, put thou this short sweet sentence into thy mouth, and keep it there, as a heavenly lozenge which shall sustain thee at all times. Make it also into a jubilant refrain; and, as thou goest on thy way, sing, again and again, "God is faithful." Trials and temptations will assail you; "but God is faithful." Friends will fail and forsake you; "but God is faithful." Health may be lost, and property may vanish; "but God is faithful." What dost thou want more than this, soldiers of Christ? Here you have breastplate, helmet, sword, shield, spear,—yea, the whole panoply of God.

III. The third comfort for a tried and tempted believer arises from GOD'S POWER, for Paul says, "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able."

God, then, has power to limit temptation; it is clear, from the Book of Job, that Satan could not tempt or try the patriarch except by divine permission; and, even then, his power was limited; nor can he tempt us unless God allows him to do so. Although the devil had great power over the elements, so that he brought disaster upon poor Job, yet there was a very definite limit to his chain, even when the Lord let him loose to a certain extent; and when God set up his barriers, Satan could not go beyond them. You remember that the Lord first said to Satan, concerning his servant Job, "Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand." When the devil again intruded himself among the sons of God, the Lord let out more links of his chain, but there was still a most emphatic limit to his power over the patriarch, "Behold, he is in thine hand; but save his life." The devil would have liked to kill Job outright, but he could go no further than the Lord allowed him to go; and God still has unlimited power over the devil and over every form of temptation or trial that can ever come upon you. If the Lord appoints for you ten troubles, he will not suffer them to be increased to eleven. If he ordains that you shall be in trouble for six years, you will not be in it for six years and a day; but, when the allotted time has expired, you shall come out of it. Nothing can resist the might of the omnipotent Jehovah, "who maketh the clouds his chariot: who walketh upon the wings of the wind." He can put a bit in the mouth of the tempest, and rein in the rushing steeds of the storm; and the fiercest of thy trials and temptations must feel the force of his overruling and restraining hand. When thou art on the dunghill, recollect that God is on his throne. Well did the psalmist sing, "The Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice;" but much more may his own people rejoice because his sovereignty is pledged to

defend them. Why, if all the armies of the devil were let loose upon a single saint, who felt himself to be weak as a worm, and the Lord said to them, "I am his defence, and ye shall not touch him;" they could not touch him, and he would be able to say, with the utmost confidence, "Greater is he that is for me than all that can be against me." The adversaries of the righteous may rage as much as they will; but they will have to spend their strength in raging, for that is all they can do against God's people without his express permission. Not a hair of their head can be scorched by the fires of persecution unless the Lord allows it. The waters of the Red Sea cannot drown them: they march between the watery walls dryshod. The lions cannot devour them: Daniel enjoyed a good night's rest even in the lions' den. Even the waves of the sea become the servitors of the saints, for "Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights," in preparation for future service for God. All his people are kept by his almighty power. How greatly this ought to comfort you who are sorely tried! Every twig of the rod of correction has been made by God, and every stroke of it is counted by him. There is not a drop more gall in your cup than the Lord has ordained. He has weighed, in the scales of the sanctuary, every ingredient of your medicine, and mixed it with all his infallible skill so that it may produce the cure of all your ills; should not this make you rejoice in the Lord all the day long, and in the night seasons as well?

IV. Fourthly, not only should tried believers rejoice in God's power, but they should also rejoice in GOD'S JUDGMENT, for Paul says, "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able."

Who beside God knows how much we are able to bear? Our consolation arises from the fact that God knows exactly how much we *can* bear. We have no idea, ourselves, what we can bear. I have, many a time, heard a person say, "If such-and-such a thing were to happen, I should break my heart, and die." Well, that very thing has happened, but the person concerned did not break his heart, and he did not die. On the contrary, he behaved himself as a Christian in trial should; God helped him wondrously, and he played the man, and became more than conqueror, and was the brighter and the braver, ever afterwards, for all the affliction through which he had passed. Brother, your own strength, in some respects, is greater than you think, and, in other respects, it is less than you think; but God knows just how much you can bear, so leave yourself in his hands.

I have known some people who have wished for trouble; it is a great pity that anybody should be so foolish as that. I remember one, who used to think that he was not a child of God because he had not had much trouble. He used to be fretting all the day long because he had nothing really to make him fret. I once heard a woman, in the street, say to her child, who was screaming lustily, "If you cry for nothing, I'll give you something to cry for." So, when a man wants trouble, he will probably get it; but it is a very silly child or man who asks for the rod. Be content to have

as little of it as you really must; you will have quite enough of it before you get to heaven. Do not ask for it; you will have it in due time. God knows, to an ounce, just what his children and his servants can carry, and he never overloads them. It is true that he sometimes sends them more trouble than they could have carried by themselves; but, then, as he increases the weight of their burden, he also increases the strength of the back upon which he places it.

I have often admired the lovingkindness of the Lord to many of my own flock here, and have noted the great joy that our young Christians have had for a number of years, and observed how remarkably God has preserved them from temptation without and from trials within. The Lord does not send his young children out to battle. He does not intend such little boats as these to go far out to sea. He will not overdrive these lambs. Yet the advanced Christians are just as happy as the young people are, and they are stronger and more fit for stern service, and more able to sympathize with others, who are in trouble, because of what they have themselves passed through. As they have grown stronger, God has given them more fighting to do for him, while the raw recruits have been kept at home to be drilled and disciplined. You know that, when there is a desperate fight being waged, and the issue of the battle seems in doubt, the commander orders "the old guard" to the front. That is part of the privileges of being an old guardsman, —to go into the hottest place on the field of battle; and it is one of the privileges of the advanced children of God to be tempted more than others, and to suffer more than others. If I could have any trial or temptation, which, otherwise, would fall upon a young brother, who has only known the Lord a week or two, I would gladly say, "Let me have it." It might stagger him, and I should be sorry for him to be staggered by it, so I will willingly endure it. You tried believers must not imagine that God does not love you as much as he did in the days of your spiritual youth, when he did not test you as he does now. He loves you quite as much as he did then, and he trusts you even more than he did then; because he has made you stronger than you used to be, he gives you the honour and privilege of marching with the vanguard of his army, or leading the forlorn hope, or standing foot to foot with old Apollyon.

God knows exactly how much temptation or trial you can bear, and he will not suffer the trial to go beyond that point. But, mark you, it will go right up to that point, for there is no such thing in the world as faith that runs to waste. For every grain of faith that God gives, he usually gives the equivalent trial of some sort or other; for, if faith could ever be in excess, it would degenerate into fanaticism, or some other unholy thing. If the Lord supplies us, at our back door as it were, with his good treasure, we are to dispose of it in our front shop in our holy trading for him.

V. Fifthly, our text seems to intimate that GOD HATH IN STORE SOMETHING TO GO WITH OUR TEMPTATIONS: "He will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."

You know how you treat your own child. There is a dose of

nasty physic to be taken, and the little one does not like it. The very sight of the spoon and cup makes it feel queer. But mother says, "Now, Johnny, take this medicine, and then you shall have this lump of sugar, or this fruit, to take away the taste of it." And when God sends a trial or trouble to one of his children, he is sure to have a choice sweetmeat to go with it. I have heard a child say, "I do not mind taking the physic so long as I get the sugar;" and I have known some of the Lord's people say, "We will willingly bear sickness, pain, bereavement, temptation, persecution, if we may but have our Saviour's presence in it all." Some of us will never forget our experiences in sickness; when our pain has been sharpest and worst, it has also been sweetest and best, at the same time. What do I not personally owe to the file, and the anvil, and the hammer in my Master's workshop? I have often said, and I say again, that the best piece of furniture in my house is the cross of affliction. I have, long ago, learned to prize it, and to praise God for it, and for that which has come to me with it, for I have often found that, with the trial, the Lord has made a way of escape, that I have been able to bear it.

Even with the temptation to sin, the Lord often sends, to the tempted soul, such a revelation of the sinfulness of sin, and of the beauty of holiness, that the poison of the temptation is quite neutralized. Even with temporal trials, the Lord often gives temporal mercies; sometimes, when he has been pleased to take away a man's wealth, he has restored to him his health, and so the man has been a distinct gainer. I have known several instances in which that has occurred. And when one dear child has been taken away out of a family, there has, perhaps, been the conversion of another of the children, which has been a wonderful compensation for the trial. And, oftentimes, trouble has been attended with an unusual delight in the Lord. The Word of God has been peculiarly sweet at such a time, and the minister has seemed to preach better than ever he did before, his message exactly fitting your condition just then. You have been surprised to find that the bitterness, which came with the trouble, has passed away almost before you were aware of it; and, as death is swallowed up in victory, like one bitter drop in a glass of water, so your trouble has been diluted with sweet wine, and you have swallowed it, and have scarcely tasted its bitterness. Thus the Lord, by his grace, and presence, and comfort, has made you so glad that you have hardly known that you have been in such trouble, because of the superabounding mercy which came with it. Ought not that to comfort us, and to make us ready for whatever the Lord pleases to send to us, or to permit to come upon us?

VI. Now, notice, in the last place, that GOD MAKES A WAY OF ESCAPE FOR HIS PEOPLE: "He will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."

I will read that over again: "He will with the temptation also make a way to escape"—"that you may get out of it"? Oh, no!—"that you may not have to endure it"? Oh, no!—"*that ye may be able to bear it.*" That is a curious way to escape, is it not?

Here is your way of retreat blocked up, and the opposing army is in front of you, yet you are to escape. You say to the Lord, "Which way am I to run?" But the Lord replies, "You must not run away; your way to escape is to cut a road right through your adversaries." That is a singular way to escape, but it is the most glorious way in the whole world. The best way for an army to escape is by conquering its foe. It is not the best way for the pilgrim to go, to the right, into the dark mountains, or to the left, into the thick forest, to escape from his enemies; the best way for him to escape is to go straight forward, despite all his adversaries; and that is the only right way for you to escape.

Now, beloved brother or sister, you may, at this moment, be expecting some very heavy affliction; and you have been asking the Lord to make a way of escape for you. You have said, "Oh, that I might not have to come to that hour of trial!" But you will have to come to it. "But cannot that dear one's life be spared?" I hope it may; but it is possible that it may not. "Then, how am I to have a way of escape?" Your way of escape is not to avoid the trial, but to be able to bear it. What a mercy it is that God, though he will not let his people escape trial, will really let them escape, for this is a way of escape for them, and the best way of escape, too. It is a way of escape from all the sin of the temptation, and from all the evil of the trial; you must have the trial, but you will only have the beneficial part of it. Brother, you must be plunged into that sea of sorrow; but it will not drown you, it will only wash and cleanse you. Sister, you must go into that fire, your Lord has so ordained it; yet you are going to escape the fire. Do you ask, "How can that be?" Why, thus,—none of your gold shall be destroyed, only the dross shall be consumed, and you shall be all the purer for passing through the fire; so again I say that this is the very best way to escape; for if we could escape in any other way, we should lose all the benefit of the trial.

What shall I say, then, in closing, but this, brethren and sisters? Are you troubled just now, and are you inclined to despair? Take wiser counsel; the storms that are beating about your barque are only such as beat about your Master's vessel, and the ships and boats in which his apostles sailed across the sea of old. These storms are not supernatural; they are not beyond what believers in Jesus are able to bear. Put your vessel's head to the wind, like a brave sailor; do not try to avoid that fierce blast. Sail in its very teeth, for there is a power within you which can overcome all the winds and the waves, for is not the Lord himself with you as your Captain, and is not the Holy Ghost with you as your Pilot, and have you not a faithful God to trust to in the stormiest night you will ever know? True, your foes are many and mighty; but face them like a man. Have no thought of turning back, and flinging away your shield; but resolve, in the mighty power of faith, that, since the Lord has said that, "as thy days, so shall thy strength be," to the end thou shalt endure; and that, with Job, thou wilt say, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." It will not be easy to keep that resolve, yet the Lord deserves that we should keep

it. Think of yourself, beloved brother, in the worst conceivable condition; and then know that there is no sufficient reason, even in such a condition as that, for you to doubt your God. Suppose yourself brought to your last penny; yet remember that there was a time when you were not worth a penny, a time when you could not put food into your own mouth, and could not put on your own garments. You were cast upon God in your first childhood, and he took care of you then; and if you grow to be a child again, and the infirmities of age increase and multiply, he who was so good at the beginning, will be quite as good at the end. Remember his ancient promise: "Even to your old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you." Such a promise as this, if God the Holy Spirit will bless it, will make the most tried believer rejoice in the Lord, and go on his way defying every foe who may be in his path.

What I cannot understand is, what people do who have not a God to trust to. I often go to see poor sick people, full of aches and pains, and it charms me to hear them talk of the goodness of the Lord to them. In talking, this week, with one of our brethren, who is very sick and ill, he spoke with such holy joy and boasting of the Lord's goodness to him, that I could not help saying that it would take a great many infidel arguments to make me doubt the power of true religion after I had listened to him. I like to see God's tried people dying full of joy, praising and blessing the name of the Lord who is their All-in-all in their most trying hour. It is not so with all of you; then what do you do, when trial comes, without a God to help you? You have not much of this world's goods, and you have to work hard; yet when you die, you have not a home to go to, you have no hope of going to heaven. Oh, you poor No-hopes! "Oh!" says one, "we are not all poor; some of us are quite well-to-do." But you are poor, for all that, even if you have all your heart can wish for here. If you have not a God, where do you carry your troubles and your griefs, for I am sure that you have some? O my dear friend, may the Lord make you feel that you cannot do without him! And when your heart has come to this resolve, "I cannot do without my God, I will not try to do without him; I feel that I must have him," then you shall have him. He waiteth to be gracious, and he hath said, "They that seek me early shall find me." May you seek him now, and find him, and to him shall be the praise for ever and ever! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

1 CORINTHIANS X. 1—13.

Verses 1—4. *Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of the spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.*

You see, then, dear brethren, that the possession of privileges is not

everything. Paul would not have us to be ignorant that all those, who were with Moses in the wilderness, had privileges of a very high order. Did they not all pass through the Red Sea, and so escape from their powerful and cruel foes? Did they not all drink of water which gushed forth from the flinty rock? Were they not all fed with manna from heaven? Yet their privileges did not save them, for while they had the five privileges mentioned in these four verses, they fell into the five great sins of which we are about to read; and so, their privileges, instead of being a blessing to them, only increased their condemnation.

5, 6. *But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things were our examples,—*

Or, warnings; for just as they were overthrown in the wilderness, so may we be, notwithstanding all the gospel privileges which we enjoy, if we are not true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. If the life of Christ is not in our souls, all the privileges of the Church of God cannot save us. "These things were our examples,"—

6—11. *To the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples;—*

The apostle has told us that before, but he tells it to us again, to warn us, by these beacons, lest we come to a similar destruction to that which befel those ancient unbelievers.

11, 12. *And they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.*

We also are to take heed lest we fall, especially those of us who think we are standing securely. You have seen how terrible was the fate of these unbelievers in the wilderness, who never entered into Canaan, but left their carcases in the desert; now Paul urges us, with such beacons to warn us, to take heed lest we also fall as they did.

13. *There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.*

O Lord, fulfil thy gracious purpose unto thy servants! Hold thou us up, lest we fall. We are very weak; keep us, for thy dear Son's sake! Amen.

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Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

DAVID'S FIRST VICTORY.

A Sermon

PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 8TH, 1904,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and smote the Philistine, and slew him; but there was no sword in the hand of David."—1 Samuel xvii. 50.

A CAREFUL perusal of the whole chapter will well repay your pains I have selected a verse for convenience, but I want the entire narrative for a text. If you are well versed in the history, we shall have no need of any preface or exordium. So we shall proceed at once to regard David, in his conflict with Goliath, and his victory over him, first, as *a type of our Lord Jesus Christ*, and, secondly, as *an example for ourselves*. As that which is a type of the head always bears a relationship to the members, and as the members of Christ's mystical body now are, and shall yet more fully be, like unto himself, it is but one thought, after all, that we shall be following out in the meditation that lies before us.

I. Let us begin by calling your attention to the fact that David in this matter was A TYPE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

The early fathers of the Church were very great in opening up typical analogies. So full, indeed, were they in their expositions, and so minute in their details, that at length they went too far, and degenerated into trifling. Origen, for example, very notably exceeded what can be regarded as wise interpretation in giving spiritual meanings to literal records. And others, who essayed to go yet farther than that great master of mysticism, very soon did much damage to the Church of God, bringing precious truths into serious discredit. The study of the types of the Old Testament has scarcely regained its proper place in the Christian Church since the days in which those gracious men, by their imprudent zeal, perverted it. We cannot, however, bring ourselves to think that a good thing ceases to be good because it has at some time been turned to an ill account. We think it can still be used properly and profitably. Within certain limits, then—limits, we suppose, which there is little danger of transgressing in these mechanical, unpoetic times—the

types and the allegories of Holy Scripture may be used as a handbook of instruction—a *vade mecum* of sound doctrine.

By the common consent of Evangelical Christians, David is seen to be an eminent type of the Lord Jesus Christ. With regard to this particular transaction let us note, at the outset, that before he fought with Goliath, David was anointed of God. Samuel had gone down to Bethlehem and poured a horn of oil upon his head. The parallel will readily occur to you. Thus hath the Lord found out for himself one whom he has chosen out of the people. With his holy oil hath he anointed him. Upon Saul's head a phial of oil was poured—upon David's head a full horn of oil. This may perhaps be designed to contrast the brevity and scant renown of Saul's reign, with the length, and power, and excellence of the reign of David. Or, being interpreted spiritually, it may denote that the law, the old Judaism of which Saul is the type, had but a limited measure of blessing, while that of the gospel, which David represents, is characterized by its abounding fulness. Jesus, the antitype of David, is anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows. Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. The Spirit was not given by measure unto him. David was anointed several times; he was anointed, as you read in the chapter preceding our text, "in the midst of his brethren;"—anointed, as you find in 2 Samuel ii. 4, by his brethren, the men of Judah;—and anointed again, as you will observe in 2 Samuel v. 3, by all the elders of Israel. We will not go into that now, but it will suffice us to note that so our Lord was anointed of God, is anointed of his saints, and shall be anointed of the whole Church. The Spirit of the Lord was upon him, and it was in the power of that Spirit with which he was anointed of the Father, that he went forth to fight the great battles of his Church. At his baptism, coming up out of the Jordan, he was anointed by the Spirit as it rested upon him, descending out of heaven like a dove; and straightway he went, as he was driven, into the wilderness, and held that notable forty days' conflict with the arch-fiend, the great adversary of souls. His battles were in the spirit and power of the Highest, for the might and majesty of the Eternal Spirit rested upon him.

See how the correspondence goes on. Our Lord was sent by his Father to his brethren. As David was sent by Jesse to his brethren with suitable presents and comfortable words, in order to commune with them, even so in the fulness of time was our Lord commissioned to visit his brethren. He remained concealed for a while in the house of his reputed father, but afterwards he came forth, and was distinctly recognized as the sent One of God, bearing countless gifts in his hands, coming on an embassage of mercy and of love from God to those whom he was not ashamed to call his brethren. We have read how David was treated. His brethren did not receive him lovingly. They answered his unaffected kindness with unprovoked rudeness: bitter things did they lay to his charge. How truly does this answer to the manner in which our Lord, the Son of David, was abused. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. Though he came to them with words of tenderness, they replied to

him with words of scorn. For his blessings they gave him curses; for the bread of heaven they gave him stones; and for the benedictions of heaven they gave him the spite of earth, the maledictions of hell! Never was a brother, "the firstborn among many brethren," so ill-used by the rest of the household. Surely that parable of the wicked husbandmen was fulfilled toward him. We know it is written that the owner of the vineyard said, "They will reverence my son;" but, contrariwise, they said, "This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours." Jesus was roughly handled by his brethren, whom he came to bless. David, you will remember, answered his brethren with great gentleness. He did not return railing for railing, but with much gentleness he endured their churlishness. In this he supplied us with but a faint picture of our beloved Master, who, when he was reviled, reviled not again. "Consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself." His only reply, even to the strokes which were to effect his death, was, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." "We hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not." Yet for all that, no word of anger dropped from his lips. He might have said, "Is there not a cause?" Little spake he, however, in his own defence; he rather went about his life-work as zealously as if all who saw him had approved him. So David, being thus rejected of his brethren, became a type of Christ.

We pass on to observe that David was moved by an intense love of his people. He saw them defied by the Philistine. As he marked how they were crushed in spirit before their formidable enemies, a fervent indignation stirred his soul; but when he heard the terms of defiance, he felt that the God of Israel himself was compromised in this quarrel. The name of Jehovah was dishonoured! That braggart giant who stalked before the hosts defied the armies of the living God! No wonder that the warm and devout heart of the brave young shepherd was moved with a mighty heaving. The passion of a warrior kindled in his breast at the sound of that profane voice of the uncircumcised Philistine, who could trifle with the honour of Jehovah, the God of heaven and of earth! A further motive was present to stimulate his patriotic ambition. How could David's bosom fail to glow with strong emotion when he was told that the man who should vanquish and slay that Philistine should be married to the king's daughter? Such a prize might well quicken his ardour. But with all these motives acting upon him, his determination to go forth and do battle with the champion of Philistia was prompt and resolute. Now in all this he plainly foreshadowed our Lord Jesus Christ. He loved his own: he was always ready to lay down his life for the sheep. But he loved his Father: "Wist ye not," he had said of old, "that I must be about my Father's business?" "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." And then there was the joy that was set before him that he should have the Church for his spouse; that at the peril, not to say the price of his life, he should obtain her; that he should see of the travail of his soul in her, and should be satisfied. She was to be lifted up to his royalties, and to share his crown and throne. The

new Jerusalem, the mother of us all, was to be unto Jesus the gift of God as his reward; and this inspired him, so he went forth and entered upon the battle for our sakes. Let us pause and bless his name that ever he should have loved the people, and that the saints should have been in his hands. Let us bless him that the zeal of God's house did eat him up,—that he consecrated himself so fully to the great enterprise. Above all, let us humbly and gratefully bless him that he loved us and gave himself for us. As a part of his Church whom he had betrothed unto himself for ever, we are partakers in all that he did. It was for us that he fought the fight, for us he won the victory, for us he has gone into glory. And he will come, by-and-by, to take us up to behold that glory, and be with him where he is. While we see the type in David, let us take care not to forget to adore Jesus himself, who is here mirrored forth to our minds in the achievement of our salvation.

I might, indeed, instance many further details in which David yet further became a type of our Lord. The whole narrative being full of minute particulars, supplies us copiously with points of analogy. But there is one thing I would have you specially observe.

Goliath is called, in the Hebrew, not "champion", as we read it in the English, but the *middle-man*, the *mediator*. If you put the whole case fairly before your own minds, you will readily see the fitness of the word that is used. There is the host of the Philistines on the one side, and there is the host of Israel on the other side. A valley lies between them. Goliath says, "I will represent Philistia. I stand as the middle-man. Instead of all the rank and file coming forth personally to the fight, I appear as the representative of my nation—the mediator. Choose you a mediator who will come and contend with me. Instead of the battle being between the individuals of which the respective armies are composed, let two representative men decide in dread duel the question in debate." Now, it is exactly upon that ground that the Lord Jesus Christ fought the battles of his people. We fell representatively in the first Adam, and our salvation now is by another representative—the second Adam. He is the Middle-man, the "one Mediator between God and men." In his love to us, and his zeal for the glory of God, we may view him as stepping forward into the midst of the arena which divides the camps of good and of evil, of God and of the devil, and there facing the defiant adversary, he stands to contend in our name and on our behalf, if we be indeed his people, that he may decide for us the quarrel which never could have been decided by us. Personally, we should, beyond a doubt, have been put to the rout. But his one single arm is enough to win the victory for us, and for ever to end the conflicts between heaven and hell.

Mark well our warrior chief as he goes forth to the fight. The son of Jesse rejected the weapons with which Saul sought to arm him;—he put the helmet on his head, the mail about his body, and was about to gird the sword upon his loins, but he said, "I cannot go with these, for I have not proved them." In like manner the Son of David renounced all earthly armour. They would have taken our Lord by force, and made him a King, but he

said, "My kingdom is not of this world." Swords enough would have leaped from their scabbards at his bidding. It was not alone Peter, whose too-hasty sword smote the ear of Malchus, but there were many zealots who would have been all too glad to have followed the star of Jesus of Nazareth as in former days; and yet more frequently, in later days, the Jews followed impostors, who declared themselves to be commissioned by the Most High for their deliverance. But Jesus said, "Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." One of the temptations of the desert was not only that he should have the kingdoms of the world, but that he should have them by the use of such means as Satan would suggest. He must fall down and worship Satan: he must use the carnal weapon, which would be tantamount to worshipping him. Jesus would not have it. To this day the great fight of Jesus Christ with the powers of darkness is not with sword and helmet, but with the smooth stones of the brook. The simple preaching of the gospel, with the shepherd's crook of the great Head of the Church held in our midst—this it is that lays low Goliath, and shall lay him low to the last day. Vain is it for the Church even to think that she shall win the victory by wealth, or by rank, or by civil authority. No government will assist her. To the power of God alone she must look. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." Happy will it be for the Church when she learns that lesson. The preaching of the cross, which is "to them that perish foolishness," is, nevertheless, to us who believe Christ, "the power of God, and the wisdom of God."

See, then, our glorious champion going forward to the fray with weapons of his own choosing, and those such as human wisdom despises, because they do not appear to be adapted to the work. With great strength and power, nevertheless, did he go forth, for he went in the name of God. "Thou comest to me," said David, "with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts." Such, too, is the predominating influence which renders the gospel omnipotent. Christ is God's propitiation. God hath "set him forth to be a propitiation for sin." Christ is appointed of God, anointed of God, sent of God. And the gospel is God's message, attended with God's Spirit. If it be not, then is it weak as water—it must fail. But since the Lord has sent it, and he has promised to bless it, we may rest assured it will accomplish the ends for which it was ordained. "I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts!" These words might serve as a motto for all those who are sent of Christ, and represent him in the dread battle for precious souls. This was Christ's watchword, when for our sakes, and on our behalf, he came to wrestle with sin, to bear the wrath of God, and to vanquish death and hell! He came in the name of God.

Mark you well that David did smite Goliath, and he smote him effectually—not in the loins, or on the hand, or on the foot—but in a vital point he delivered the stroke that laid him low. He smote him on the brow of his presumption, on the forehead of his pride. I suppose he had lifted up his vizor to take a look at his

contemptible adversary, when the stone sank in, which let out for ever the boastful soul. So, when our Lord stood forth to contend with sin, he projected his atoning sacrifice as a stone that has smitten sin and all its powers upon the forehead. Thus, glory be to God, sin is slain. It is not merely wounded, but it is *slain* by the power of Jesus Christ.

And remember that David cut off Goliath's head with his own sword. Augustine, in his comment on this passage, very well brings out the thought that the triumph of our Saviour Jesus Christ is here set forth in the history of David. He, "through death, destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." "He death by dying slew"—cut off the giant's head with his own sword. The cross that was meant to be the death of the Saviour was the death of sin. The crucifixion of Jesus, which was supposed to be the victory of Satan, was the consummation of his victory over Satan. Lo, this day, I see, in our conquering Hero's hand, the grizzly head of the monster sin, all dripping with gouts of gore. Look at it, ye that once were under its tyranny. Look at the terrible lineaments of that hideous and gigantic tyrant. Your Lord has slain your foe. Your sins are dead; he has destroyed them. His own arm, single-handed and alone, has destroyed your gigantic enemy. "The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Blessed and magnified be his holy name. And when David had thus achieved the death of Goliath, he was met by the maidens of Israel, who came forth and sang in responsive verse, accompanied with the music of their timbrels and joyous dancings, "Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands." So he had his triumph. Meanwhile, the hosts of Israel, seeing that the Philistine giant was dead, took heart and dashed upon the adversary. The Philistines were affrighted and they fled, and every Israelite that day became a victor through the victory of David. They were more than conquerors, through him that had loved them and won the victory for them. So let us now bethink ourselves to be victors. Our Lord has won the victory. He is to his glory gone. The angels have met him on the way. They have said, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in." And they that have been with him have answered to the question, "Who is this King of glory?" They have said, "The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory." And, this day, the feeblest believer triumphs in Christ. Though we should have been beaten, nor could we have hoped for victory—yet, now, through Jesus Christ our Lord, we chase our enemies; we trample sin under our feet; and we go from strength to strength through his completed victory. There is much room for you to think here. Will you think this over for yourselves? It is better I should not do all the thinking for you. You will find the analogy capable of much amplification. I have given you only just as it were a sort of charcoal outline—a rough draft. Make a picture of it at your leisure, and it may prove a beneficial study and a profitable meditation.

II. With much brevity let us now revert to David as AN EXAMPLE FOR EVERY BELIEVER IN CHRIST.

Above all things, it behoves us, dear brethren and sisters, to consider that if we are ever to do anything for God and for his Church we must be anointed with holy oil. Oh, how vain it would be for us to grow zealous with a sort of creature carnal fanaticism, and to attempt great things, in sheer presumption, which can only issue in utter failure! Unless the Spirit of God be upon us, we have no might from within and no means from without to rely upon. Wait upon the Lord, beloved, and seek strength from him alone. There cannot come out of you what has not been put into you. You must receive and then give out. Remember how the Lord Jesus describes it:—"The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." And again, in another place, "he that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water."

You cannot do David's work if you have not David's anointing. When you remember that your Divine Master tarried for the heavenly anointing, you can hardly expect to do without it. Be not so foolish. Christ went not to his public ministrations till the Spirit of God rested upon him. The apostles tarried at Jerusalem, and went not forth to preach till power was given to them from on high. The point, the pre-requisite, the *sine quâ non* with us, is to have that power. Oh, to preach in that power—to pray in that power—to look after wandering souls in that power! Your Sunday-school work, your home missionary work, your every form of ministry for Christ, must be done in that power. Get ye to your knees. Get ye to the cross. Get ye to your Master's feet. Sit ye still in faith and hope, until he shall have given you the strength that shall qualify you to do the Master's work, in the Master's way, to the Master's praise.

David, too, stands before us as an example of the fact that our opportunity will come, if our efficiency has been bestowed, without our being very particular to seek it. David fell into position. The place he was fitted to occupy, he was providentially called to fill as a great man in Israel. Little did he guess, when he went with the load of bread, and corn, and cheese, that he was, ere long, to be distinguished beyond all other men in Palestine. Yet it was so. Beloved, do not be in a hurry to look out for your sphere. Be ready for your sphere; your sphere will come to you. I speak to many dear young brethren who are studying for the ministry. Be prepared for any work rather than be looking out for some particular work. God has his niche for you. You will drop on your feet: depend upon that. Be ready. Your business is to be ready. Have your tools well sharpened, and know how to handle them. The place will come to you, the best place for you, if you are not so much looking after that which meets your taste, as after that which proves you to be a vessel fit for the Master's use. David finds his occasion. He has received the Spirit first, which is the main thing, and then he has found the occasion which calls out his credentials.

I gather from David's example that, when we feel a call to do something for God, and for his Church, we need not wait until those whom we hold in respect coincide with us as to the propriety of entering upon the service. Had David said, "Well, I shall wait till Eliab, and Abinadab, and Shammah, my elder brothers, are all perfectly agreed that I am the man to fight Goliath," I suspect he would never have fought with Goliath at all. Great deference is due to the judgment of our seniors, but greater respect is due to the motions of the Spirit of God within our heart. I would to God there were more regard shown for those inward monitions among Christians than there is wont to be in these times. If thou hast a thought put into thy heart, or a charge laid upon thy conscience, obey it, man; act up to it, though no one else perceives it or encourages thee. If God has shown thee his counsel, at your peril hide the presage or shrink from the performance. What! With the fear of God in our hearts, and a commission from God in our hands, shall we halt and hesitate and become the servants of men? I would rather die than have to come into this pulpit to ask your leave, or to get any man's consent, as to what I shall preach. God speaks, by his Spirit, what he has to say to me; and, by the help of his good Spirit, I will deliver it to you as I hear it from himself. May this tongue be silent or ever it becomes the servant of man. David was of that mind. He felt he had something to do, and though he could listen to what other people had to say, yet they were no masters of his. He served the living God, and he went about the business entrusted to him undaunted by any judgment they might form of him. He that speaketh for God should speak honestly. Let others criticize and sift the chaff from the wheat. He must expect that. But as for himself, let him give out the pure wheat as he believeth it to be, and fear no man, lest he come under the condemnation of the God of heaven. Go, my brother, about thy business, if God give it to thee to do. If I upbraid thee, what of that? I am but a man. Or if all those, in whose good esteem thou wouldst gladly stand, turn upon thee with hard suspicions and cutting censures—they are but men, and to God alone is thine allegiance due. Go thou about thy Master's work, as David did, with dauntless nerve but modest mien. He were an ill servant who, after once getting his Master's orders, should leave them unperformed, and excuse himself by saying, "I met one of my fellow-servants, and he said he thought I might be too bold in my adventure, and therefore I had better not attempt it." To your own Master you will stand or fall. Take care that you stand well with him.

Learn from David, too, to return quiet answers to those who would roughly put you aside from your work. Generally it is better to return no answer at all. I think David spake not so well by word as by deed. His conduct was more eloquent than his language. As he came back from the fight, holding up the giant's head, I could hope that Eliab saw him; and that Abinadab and Shammah came out to meet him. If they did, he might simply have held up the trophy, and allowed its ghastly visage to reply for him. It is not, they would think, after all, because of his pride or the

naughtiness of his heart, or from an idle curiosity to see the battle, that he has come. They would perceive that he had come to do God's work in his own way: that God had helped him to gain the victory, rout the foe, and relieve the fears of Israel; and that through the man whom they despised the Lord had made his own name glorious.

Learn, again, from David's example, the prudence of keeping to tried weapons. I have often heard it spoken of as an unlikely thing that David should kill the giant with a stone. I think those who talk so miss the point. What missile could be handier or better suited for the occasion? If the fellow was tall, a sling would carry a stone high enough to reach him; and if he was strong, very strong, the sling would give such impetus to the stone that David could assail his adversary without getting within his reach. It was the best weapon he could have used. Oriental shepherds, if those of olden time were like those of modern days, had practice enough to make them proficient in slinging stones. They spend many hours both alone and with their fellows over feats of the sling. It is generally their best weapon for the protection of their sheep in the vast solitudes. I do not doubt that David had learnt to sling a stone to a hair's breadth, and not miss. As for the sword, he had never had one in his life; for there was neither sword nor spear found in the hand of any of the people that were with Saul and Jonathan, save that which was found with Saul and Jonathan his son. We are told as much as that in the thirteenth chapter. The Philistines had so completely disarmed the whole populace that they had not got any such weapons. With the use of them, therefore, David could not have been familiar. And as to the coat of mail—a cumbersome, uneasy, comfortless equipment—the wonder to me is how the knights of old did anything at all in such accoutrements. No marvel that David put the thing off. He felt most at ease in his own shepherd's garb. Of course we are not going to infer that unsuitable instruments are desirable. We teach nothing so romantic or absurd. It well becomes us to use the most suitable tools we can find. As for those stones out of the brook, David did not pick them up at hazard; he carefully chose them, selecting smooth stones that would exactly fit in his sling—the kind of stone he thought best fitted for his purpose. Nor did he trust in his sling. He tells us he trusted in God, but he went to work with his sling as if he felt the responsibility to be his own. To miss the mark would prove his own clumsiness: to compass his aim would be of God's enabling. Such, my brethren, is the true philosophy of a Christian's life. You are to do good works as zealously as if you were to be saved by your good works, and you are to trust in the merits of Christ as though you had done nothing at all. So, too, in the service of God, though you are to work for God as if the fulfilment of your mission rested with yourselves, you must clearly understand, and steadfastly believe that, after all, the whole matter, from first to last, rests with God. Without him, all you have ever planned or performed is unavailing. That was sound philosophy of Mahomet's when the man said, "I have turned my camel loose, and

trusted in providence." "No," answered he, "tie your camel up and then trust in providence." Do the best you can and trust in God. God never meant that faith in him should be synonymous with sloth. Why, for the matter of that, if it is all God's work, and that is to be the only consideration, there is no need for David to have a sling. Nay, there is not any need for David at all. He may go back, lie on his back in the middle of the field, and say, "God will do his work: he does not want me." That is how fatalists would talk, but not how believers in God would act. They say, "God wills it, therefore I am going to do it;"—not, "God does it, and therefore there is nothing for me to do." Nay, "Because God works by me, therefore I will work by his good hand upon me. He is putting strength into his feeble servant, and making use of me as his instrument, good for nothing though I am apart from him. Now will I run to the battle with alacrity, and I will use my sling with the best skill I have, taking quiet, calm, deliberate aim at that monster's brow, since I believe that God will guide the stone and accomplish his own end." When you are bent on serving God give him your best; keep not back ought of nerve or muscle, ought of skill or sagacity, you can dedicate to the enterprise. Say not, "Anything will do: God can bless my lack as well as my competency." Doubtless he can, but undoubtedly he will not. Be careful to do your best. David in his old age and his riper experience would not offer to God that which cost him nothing. Do not attempt to render unto God slovenly service, and flatter yourselves that he will bless it. He can bless it; but that is not the way in which he usually deigns to work. Though he often takes rough tools, he fashions them and polishes them for his use. He can convert rude men into able ministers of the New Testament. Think not, however, that his grace will excuse your presumption. But go with the instruments you have proved. When any of you working men attempt to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ, do not try the fine arguments that are often used to combat infidels. You will never manage them. They will be sure to embarrass you. Tell to your neighbours and comrades what you have felt and handled of the Word of Life. Declare to them those things that are written in the Scriptures. These texts are the smooth stones that will suit your sling. Keep to these things. Why, they tell us, nowadays, that we ought to take up those arguments which are invented by modern philosophers, examine them, study them, and come forward on the Sabbath-day and at other times to answer them; that we should use historical research and logical acumen to rebut infidel calumnies. Ah! Saul's armour does not fit us. They that like it may wear it; but, after all, to preach Christ and him crucified—to tell out the old, old story of eternal love and of the blood which sealed it, the manner of redemption, the truth of God's unchangeable grace—this is to use those stones and that sling which will surely find out the forehead of the foe.

Next, observe that, from the work which David began, he ceased not till he had finished it. He had laid the giant prone upon the soil, but he was not satisfied till he had cut off his head. I wish

that some who work for Christ would be as thorough as this young volunteer was. Have you taught a child the way of salvation? Do not leave off till that child is enrolled in the fellowship of believers. Have you faithfully preached the gospel to any congregation of people? Continue to instruct, counsel, and encourage them, until you see them established in the faith. Or if you have refuted a heresy, or denounced a vice, follow up the assault until the evil is exterminated. Not only kill the giant, but have his head off! Never do the work of the Lord imperfectly. Never spare, in pity, any device of the devil. Bad habits and besetting sins should be levelled with a decisive blow. But let not that be enough. Give them no chance of recovering their strength. With humble penitence and earnest resolution, in reliance on God and detestation of the foe, see to it that the head shall be taken from the sin as well as the stone sunk in its forehead. In so doing you may look for help you had not reckoned on. You have no sword with you: you have not wanted to cumber yourself with one, even as David had no need to carry a sword in his hand, for Goliath was carrying a sword with him, which might well serve for his own execution. Whenever you serve God, you strive against error; and remember that every error carries the sword with which it will be slain. In maintaining the cause of truth, we need not be surprised if the fight be long; but we may always count on the pride of the adversary turning to his own hurt. The conflict will be shortened by himself. When the invaders, most of all, relied on the alliances they had formed, it often happened that Israel won the day through the Moabites and the Assyrians falling out amongst themselves. Very frequently it has been God's plan to let his adversaries turn upon each other and end the fight to his servants' comfort. Behold the giant's head taken off with his own sword. Let it be before your eyes for a sign. It matters not, brethren, though we should be in the minority on certain eminent matters, as we undoubtedly are. The question for you is, are you right? Are you right? The right is sure to win! Have you the truth on your side? Have you the Bible on your side? Have you Christ on your side? Well, you may belong to a despised community; you may be associated with a very few and a very poor people. Flinch not—let not your heart quail. Had you no strength with which to overcome the adversary, excepting that which is promised by God, you have quite enough. But there lies in ambush, in the camp of your adversary, an assistance and an aid to truth that you have not perhaps thought of. The old dragon stings himself to death. As vice consumes the vitals of the man who indulges in it, so does error, in the long run, become its own destroyer. Full often truth shines out the more brightly from the very fact that an error has beclouded the world with its dense shadows. Go on, then! Strive with coolness and courage! Be not daunted by the comely face, the princely figure, or the battle array of your antagonist! Let not his vaunting words deter you. Call on the name of Jehovah, the Lord of hosts, and use, even in God's battles, those weapons which you have tested and proved. But take care to go through with God's work; do it

thoroughly, looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of your faith; so beloved, you may expect to go from strength to strength, and bring glory to God.

I would we were all on the Lord's side, that we were all the soldiers of Christ. Do any here confess that they are not? Are there any of you, who feel sin lying heavily upon you, and yet you fain would be at peace with God, in fellowship with Jesus? Beloved, Jesus has never yet rejected one that came to him. It has never yet been said that his blood was not able to cleanse the vilest soul! Go to him. You cannot give him greater joy than by going to him and confessing your sin and seeking his mercy. He waits to be gracious. He slays sin, but he takes pity on sinners. He is ready to pardon them. He is the enemy of Goliath, but he sits on Zion's hill, glad to welcome the very poorest of the poor that come to him. If you are the worst sinner that ever lived, he is still able to save to the uttermost. If you have no hope and no confidence—if you feel as though sentence had gone forth that you should die for ever, your fears are no clue to God's counsels. He has not spoken the bitter things you have imagined against yourself. Give ear to what he has said: "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Oh! to be on Christ's side maintains the heart in calm and inflames the soul with joy, notwithstanding the pain that now tortures your nerves, or the shame that mantles your cheeks! But ah! to be on the other side—to be an enemy of Jesus—is a woe that blights all present joy, and a portent that augurs all future bane. The future, the future, the future! This is the worst of all to be dreaded. "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him." The Lord give you, every one of you, to be thus timely wise, for his name's sake! Amen.

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A Sermon

PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 15TH, 1904,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On a Lord's-day Evening, in the year 1877.

"Will ye also go away?"—John vi. 67.

No mischief that ever befalls our Christian communities is more lamentable than that which comes from the defection of the members. The heaviest sorrow that can wring a pastor's heart is such as comes from the perfidy of his most familiar friend. The direst calamity the Church can dread is not such as will arise from the assault of enemies outside, but from false brethren and traitors within the camp. My eminent predecessor, Benjamin Keach, though arrested, brought before the magistrates, imprisoned, pilloried, and otherwise made to suffer by the Government of the times for the gospel doctrines that he preached and published, found it easier to brook the rough usage of open foes than to bear the griefs of wounded love, or sustain the shock of outraged confidence. I should not think his experience was very exceptional. Other saints would have preferred the rotten eggs of the villagers to the rooted animosities of slanderers. Troy could never be taken by the assaults of the Greeks outside her walls. Only when, by stratagem, the enemy had been admitted within the citadel was that brave city compelled to yield. The devil himself was not such a subtle foe to Christ as was Judas, when, after the sop, Satan entered into him. Judas was a friend of Jesus. Jesus addressed him as such. And Judas said, "Hail, Master," and kissed him. But Judas it was who betrayed him. That is a picture which may well appal you; that is a peril which may well admonish you. In all our churches, among the many who enlist there are some who desert. They continue awhile, and then they go back to the world. The radical reason why they retire is an obvious incongruity. "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us." The unconverted adherents in our fellowship are no loss to the church when they depart. They are not a real deficit, any more than the scattering of

the chaff from the threshing floor is a detriment to the wheat. Christ keeps the winnowing fan always going. His own preaching constantly sifted his hearers. Some were blown away because they were but chaff. They did not really believe. By the ministry of the gospel, by the order of Providence, by all the arrangements of Divine government, the precious are separated from the vile, the dross is purged away from the silver, so that the good seed and the pure metal may remain and be preserved. The process is always painful. It causes great searching of heart amongst those who abide faithful, and occasions deep anxiety to gentle spirits of tender, sympathetic mould.

I trust, dear friends, that you will not think I harbour any ungenerous suspicions of your fidelity, because my text contains so pointed and so personal an appeal to your conscience. There is more of pathos than of passion in the question as our Lord put it—"Ye will not go away, will ye?" He addressed the favoured twelve. I put it to myself; I put it to those who are the officers of the church; I put it to every member without exception: Will ye also go away? But should there be one to whom it is peculiarly applicable, I do not desire to flinch from putting the question most personally to that one,—"What! Are *you* going? Do you mean to turn back? Do you mean to go away?"

I. Let us approach the enquiry sideways. "Will ye *also* go away?" "Also" means "as well as other people." WHY DO OTHERS GO? If they have any good reason, perhaps we may see cause to follow their example. Look narrowly, then, at the various causes or excuses for defection. Why do they renounce the religious profession they once espoused? The fundamental reason is want of grace, a lack of true faith, an absence of vital godliness. It is, however, the outward reasons which expose the inward apostasy of the heart from Christ of which I am anxious to treat.

Some there are in these days, as there were in our Lord's own day, who depart from Christ because *they cannot bear his doctrine*. Our Lord had more explicitly than on any former occasion declared the necessity of the soul's feeding upon himself. They probably misunderstood his language, but they certainly took umbrage at his statements. Hence there were those who said, "This is an hard saying; who can hear it?" So they walked no more with him.

There are many points and particulars in which the gospel is offensive to human nature and revolting to the pride of the creature. It was not intended to please man. How can we attribute such a purpose to God? Why should he devise a gospel to suit the whims of our poor fallen human nature? He intended to save men, but he never intended to gratify their depraved tastes. Rather doth he lay the axe to the root of the tree and cut down human pride. When God's servants are led to set forth some humbling doctrine, there are those who say, "We will never assent to that." They kick against any truth which clashes with their prejudices. What say you, brethren, to the claims of the gospel on your allegiance? Should you discover that God's Word rebukes your favourite pleasure, or contradicts your cherished convictions, will you forthwith take

the huff and go away? Nay; but if your hearts are right with Christ, you will be prepared to welcome all his teaching and yield obedience to all his precepts. Only prove it to be Christ's teaching, and the right-minded professor is ready to receive it. That which is transparent on the face of Scripture he will cordially accept, as he says, "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them." As for that which is merely inferred and argued from the general drift of Scripture, the true heart will not be hasty to reject, but patient to investigate, like the Bereans, who "were more noble than the Jews of Thessalonica, in that they searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so." Oh, that the Word of Christ may dwell in us richly! God forbid that any of us should ever turn aside, being offended because of him, his blessed person, his holy example, or his sacred teaching! May we be ever ready to believe what he says, and prompt to do what he commands! Remember, brethren, that the gospel commission has three parts to which the minister has to attend. We are to go and preach the gospel first. "*Go ye, and disciple all nations.*" The second part is, "*baptizing them;*" and the third part is, "*teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.*" As willing disciples of Jesus, let us press forward, hearkening to his voice, following in his footsteps, and accounting his revealed will as our supreme law. Far be it from us to go back from him because we are offended at his doctrine.

Others there are who desert *for the sake of gain.* Many have been entangled in that snare. Mr. By-ends originally went on pilgrimage because he thought it would pay. There was a silver mine on the road, and he purposed to survey that, and see whether silver might not be obtained there as well as at the golden city beyond. He came, if I remember rightly, of a family that got its living by the waterman's business, looking one way and pulling another. He was apparently striving for religion, though he had his eye all the while on the world. He was for holding with the hare and running with the hounds. So, when he came to a point where he must part with one or the other, he considered which would, upon the whole, be the more profitable, gave up that which appeared to involve loss and self-sacrifice, and kept to that which would, as he called it, "help him in the main chance," and assist him to get on in the present life. Sincerely do I trust there is no one among us but who despises Mr. By-ends and all of his class. If you would make money—and there need be nothing sinful in that—do let it be made honestly; never let riches be pursued under the pretence of religion. Sell your wares and find a market for your merchandise, but do not sell Christ, nor barter a heavenly birthright for a worthless bribe. Put what goods you please into your shop window, but do not put a canting, hypocritical expression on your face, or "wear a holy leer," with a view of turning godliness into gain.

Some leave Christ, and go away, *terrified by persecution.* Nowadays, it is supposed that there is no such thing; but that is a mistake; for though martyrs are not burned at Smithfield and the

Lollards' Tower is a place for show (a memorial of times long ago), yet the harass, the cruelty, and the oppression are far enough from being obsolete. Godless husbands play the part of petty tyrants, and will not permit their wives the enjoyment of religion, but make their lives bitter with a galling bondage. Employers full often wreak malice on servants whose piety towards God is their sole cause of offence. Worse still, there are working men who consider themselves intelligent, who cannot allow their fellow-workman liberty to go to a place of worship without sneers and jeers and cruel mockings. In many cases the mirth of the workshop is never louder than when it is turned against a believer in Christ. They count it rare fun to hunt a man who cares for the salvation of his soul. They call themselves "Englishmen," but certainly they are no credit to their country. Look at the base-born, ill-bred cowards. Yonder is an atheist; he is raving about his rights because the magistrate will not believe him on his oath; he claims liberty of conscience to be a heathen himself, but denies his comrade's right to be a Christian. Look at that little party of British workmen; they belong to the Sabbath Desecration Society. They are petitioning Parliament to open museums and theatres on Sundays, and at the same time they are hounding to death a poor fellow who prefers going to chapel. They air their own self-respect by the oaths they utter, while they betray their self-abasement by the scorn they vent on those who presume to sing a hymn. They hail the drunkard as a chum, and scout the sober man as a fiend. I wonder that there is not more honourable feeling, more good faith and true fellowship among our skilled workmen than to allow of one man being made the butt of a whole community. God give you grace to bear such persecutions as these! If they cut you to the quick, may you learn to bear them with equanimity, and even to rejoice that you are counted worthy to suffer for the Saviour's sake! Some of us have had to "run the gauntlet" for many years. What we have said has been constantly misrepresented; what we have endeavoured to do has been misjudged, and our motives have been misunderstood. Yet here we are, as happy as anybody out of heaven. We have not been injured by any or all the calumnies that have been heaped upon us. Our foes would have crushed us; but, blessed be God, he cheered us often when we were cast down. The Lord give you, in like manner, strength of mind and courage of heart to bear the trial manfully! Then you will care no more for the laughter and the sneers of men than you do for the noise of those migratory birds high overhead, which you hear on an autumn evening as they are making their weary journey to a distant clime. Take heart, man. Fear God, and face your accusers. True courage grows strong on opposition. Never think of deserting the army of Christ. Least of all should you play the coward because of the insolence of some ill-mannered bully. Let not your faith be vanquished by such scoffing. Alas, that so many a craven spirit has gone away for the sake of carnal ease, and deserted Christ, when he has become the drunkard's jest and the derision of fools.

There are some people, who forsake true religion *out of sheer*

levity. I know not how to account for some men's defections. If you take up the list of wrecks, you will notice some that have gone down through collisions, and others through striking upon rocks; but sometimes you read of a vessel, "Foundered at sea." How it happened, no one knows; the owner himself cannot explain it. There are some professors who, concerning faith, have made shipwreck under such apparently easy circumstances, so free from trial, so exempt from temptation, that we have not seen anything to awaken anxiety on their behalf, yet all of a sudden they have foundered. We are startled and amazed. I remember one, who fell into a gross sin, of whom a brother unwisely said, "If that man is not a Christian, I am not." His prayers had certainly been sweet. Many a time they have melted me down before the throne of grace, and yet the life of God could not have been in his soul, for he lived and died in flagrant vice, and was impenitent to the last. Such cases I can only attribute to a sort of levity, which can be charmed with a sermon or a play; take a pew at the chapel or a box at the opera with equal nonchalance; and eagerly follow the excitement of the hour, "everything by turns and nothing long." "Unstable as water, they shall not excel." On the spur of the moment, they profess Christianity, though they do not espouse it; and then, without troubling themselves to renounce it, they drop off into infidelity. They are soft and malleable enough to be hammered into any shape. Made of wax, they can be moulded by any hand that is strong enough to grip them. The Lord have mercy upon any of you who may happen to be of that genus! You spring up soon, and suddenly you wither. Hardly is the seed sown before the sprout appears. What a wonderful harvest you promise! But, ah! no sooner has the sun risen with a burning heat than, because there is no depth of soil, the green shoot withers away. Pray God that you may be ploughed deep, that the iron pan of rock underneath may be broken right up, that you may have plenty of subsoil and root-hold, that the verdure you produce may be permanent. Lack of principle is deadly, but the lack is far too common. Never cease to pray that you may be rooted and grounded, stablished and built up in Christ, so that when the floods come and the winds blow, you may not fall with a great destruction, as that house fell which was built upon the sand.

But, oh, what multitudes are tempted aside from following Christ and his Church *by evil companions!* They do not avoid the society of the wicked; and as a man is known by the company he keeps, we soon discover the direction in which they are drawn. The more intimately we know them, the more readily we perceive their propensities. Have a care, then, with whom you associate. Never confide in those persons of whose principles you have good cause to stand in doubt. Above all, let me admonish you, young people, not to be "unequally yoked together." Marriage without the fear of God is a fearful mistake. Those ill-assorted unions between believers and unbelievers rob our churches of more members than any other popular delinquency that I know of. Seldom—I might almost say never—do I meet with a woman professing godliness who

becomes joined in wedlock to a man of the world but what she goes away. She ceases to follow Jesus, and we hear no more of her. Absorbed in the pursuits, the passions, and the pleasures of the life that now is, she is sucked under the stream and drawn into the vortex. In the romance of her courtship, she glibly said, "I shall win him;" but, in the reality of their conjugal bonds, he could coolly say, "I have won you." Probably the stronger nature wins the day. In this case, however, a precept of the gospel is violated and the penalty of disobedience is incurred. It is much easier for the one who professes religion to give up the faith, after laying down the cross, than for another who has no religion to take up the cross and follow the Saviour in whom he has never yet believed. I counsel you, young man or woman, who contemplate a marriage on the basis of capricious attractions, without reference to the sanctity of the relationship before God, to communicate your intention to your minister, and renounce your membership of the church, before you seal your vows. Give up all profession of religion voluntarily. Do not wait to be excommunicated. Do not sneak away without giving an account of yourself. You had better count the cost and pay the price of your own presumption. Should your unwarranted but sanguine hopes succeed, and your earnest endeavours to gain the conversion of your helpmeet be successful, that would be an uncovenanted mercy. If God chose to give it to you, it would not even then excuse you for tempting him by your waywardness, or provoking him to jealousy by your wilfulness. There is an express command, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers." I appeal to every Christian man or woman who has been converted since marriage,—Do you not find it exceedingly hard to keep up your courage when one pulls one way and one another? And does it not cut you to the quick to think that your union is but temporary; that, however dear you may be to each other now, you will be parted at the judgment seat of Christ—parted to meet no more? The Lord make us careful about our associates, about those among whom we stand, by whom we sit, with whom we walk!

And, oh, how many leave Christ *for the sake of sensual enjoyments!* I will not enlarge upon this. Certain, however, is it that the pleasures of sin for a season fascinate their minds till they sacrifice their souls at the shrine of sordid vanity. For a merry dance, a wanton amusement, or a transient joy that would not bear reflection, they have renounced the pleasures that never pall, the immortal hopes that never fail, and turned their backs upon that blessed Saviour, who gives and feeds the taste for joy unspeakable, for joy full of glory.

In our pastoral oversight of such a huge church as this, we have painful evidence that *considerable numbers gradually grow cold.* The elders' reports on the absentees reiterate the vain excuses for non-attendance. One has so many children. The distance is too great for another. When they joined the church, their family was just as large, and the distance was just the same. But the household cares become more irksome when the concern for religion begins to flag; and the fatigue of travelling increases when

their zeal for the house of God falters. The elders fear they are growing cold. No actual transgression can we detect, but there is a gradual declension over which we grieve. I dread that cold-heartedness; it steals so insensibly yet so surely over the entire frame. I do not say that it is worse than open sin. It cannot be. Yet it is more insidious. A flagrant delinquency would startle one as a fit does a patient; but a slow process of backsliding may steal like paralysis over a person without awakening suspicion. Like the sleep which comes over men in the frozen regions, if they yield to it they will never wake again. You must be aroused, or else this supineness will surely end in death. "Grey hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth not." Is it so with any of you, dear friends? Are you going aside by slow degrees? He that loses his substance little by little presently becomes a bankrupt, and painful is the discovery when the end is precipitated. How miserable must a spiritual bankruptcy be to him who wastes by degrees his heavenly estate, if he ever had any! No words can describe it. God preserve us from such a catastrophe!

Some have turned aside, who allege that they did so *through change of circumstances*. They were with us when their means of livelihood were competent, if not affluent. From reverses in business they have sunk in their social position. Hence they do not like to come into fellowship with us as they were wont to do. Now, from my inmost soul I can say, if any of our members become poor, I, for one, do not think one atom the less of them, or hold them in less esteem, however impoverished they may become. Do not tell me that you have no clothes fit to come in; for any clothes that you have paid for are creditable. If you have not paid for them, I cannot make excuses for you. Be honest. Frieze or fustian need not shame you; but for fineness or fashion I should certainly blame you. I am always glad to see brethren sitting here, as I sometimes do, in their smock-frocks. One good friend is rather conspicuous in that line. The wholesome whiteness of his rural garb is rather attractive. If he has paid for it, he is a far more respectable man than anyone that has run into debt for a suit of broadcloth that he cannot pay for. And I rejoice to think that I am not expressing my own feeling merely, but that which is shared by the whole community. We all delight to see our poor brethren. If there are any of you suffering from a sensitiveness of your own, or a suspicion of our reflections, the sooner you get rid of such foolish pride the happier you will be. You are jealous of being thought respectable. Don't you know that a man is respectable for his character, not for the money he has in his pocket.

Others forsake Christ *when they become rich and increased in goods*. They did not scorn the little conventicle when they were plain plodding people; but since fortune has smiled on them, and they have moved their residence from a terrace to a mansion, and they have taken to keep a carriage, they feel bound to move in another circle. To their parish church, or to some Ritualistic church in their neighbourhood, they go once on the Sunday. They patronize the place by their presence; they show themselves among the *élite* of

that locality; they bow, and bend, and face about to the East, as though they had been to the manner born. They are too respectable to go into the little Baptist chapel. They receive visitors in the afternoon, dine late, and dissipate Sabbatic hours in the frivolous pretence of showing off their gentility. Well, I think their departure is not to be lamented. When gone they are certainly no loss to anybody. We sigh for them as we would for Judas or Demas. They have fallen foul of what they thought their good fortune, but of what has proved to be their ruin. Those who have true principle, when they rise in the world, see more reason why they should use their wealth and their influence in aiding a good cause. Principle would prevail over policy to the end of their lives if in their hearts they believed the truth as it is in Jesus. It were no dishonour to a prince to go and sit down side by side with a pauper, were they both true followers of Jesus Christ.

In old times, when our sires sought refuge in caves and dens of the earth, they met the high and the low, the bond and the free; or when, in earlier ages, the Christians gathered in the catacombs, men out of Cæsar's household—now a chief, then a senator, anon a prince of the blood—came and sat down in those caverns, lighted up with the dim candle, to listen while some unshod but heaven-taught man declared the gospel of Jesus with the power of the Holy Spirit. That they were illiterate, I am quite sure; for, on looking over the monuments that are found in the catacombs, it is rare to find one inscription that is thoroughly well spelt. Though it is evident enough that the early Christians were an uneducated company of men, yet those that were great and noble, learned and polished, did not disdain to join with them, nor will they ever in any age if the light of heaven shines and the love of God burns in their hearts.

Unsound doctrine induces many to apostatize. There is always plenty of that about. Deceivers will beguile the weak; some have been turned aside by modern doubt; and positive infidelity has its partisans. They begin cautiously by reading works with a view to answer scientific or intellectual scepticism. They read a little more, and dive a little deeper into the turbid stream, because they feel well able to stand against the insidious influence. They go on, till at last they are staggered. They do not repair to those who could help them out, but they continue to flounder on till, at last, they have lost their footing, and he that said he was a believer has ended in stark atheism, discrediting even the evidence of the existence of God. Oh, that those who are well taught would be content with gospel teaching! Why should you be so unwise as to go through pools of foul teaching merely because you think it easy to cleanse yourself of its pollution? Such trifling is dangerous. When you begin to read a book and find it pernicious, put it aside. Someone may upbraid you for not reading it all through. But why should you? If I have a joint of meat on my table of which the smell and the taste at once convince me that it is putrid and unwholesome, should I show discretion by eating the whole of it before giving my judgment that it is not fit for food? One mouthful is quite enough,

and one sentence of some books ought to suffice for a sensible man to reject the whole mass. Let those who can relish such meat feed on it, but I have a taste for better food. Keep to the study of the Word of God. If it be your duty to expose those evils, encounter them bravely, with prayer to God to help you. But if not, as a humble believer in Jesus, what business have you to taste and test such noxious fare when it is exposed in the market?

Can you doubt that there are some who turn aside from Christ and his people *through sheer laziness?* They have nothing whatever to do, and what must a Christian be at who has no part in the service of Christ? Nothing to do for Jesus! A drone in the hive! I do not wonder that you go away. My wonder is that the bees do not drive you out. On the other hand, I fear others have gone aside *through having been too busy;* they have been so occupied that they have neglected to feed their own souls. I am always pleased to see our dear brothers and sisters diligent in the service of Christ. I am glad to miss many of you on the Lord's-day evening when I know how well you are engaged. I could spare a few more of you if you were intent upon teaching the young, or exhorting those who are out of the way. But I earnestly admonish you never to be negligent of your own souls while you are vigilant for the souls of others. If you do not get nourished with the bread of life yourselves, you cannot grow in grace. This caution, I am fully persuaded, is not uncalled for. There are some who get so absorbed in Christian work that they never listen to the Word; they hardly ever read; they only talk. This is sorry work. If you do not take in, you cannot give out. If your own soul is starved, you cannot be strong for the Lord's service. Get at least one good spiritual meal in the day. Then spend all the strength you have for God, and rely on him for frequent renewals. Keep up the fire within, and add fresh fuel to give a more fervent heat. See to it that you are not losing communion with Christ while you think you are getting conversions to Christ. That is a peril you good people must not play with. It is far too serious. But I will not continue in this strain. It is painful to me, if not to you.

II. Now I want briefly to answer a second enquiry,—WHAT BECOMES OF THOSE WHO TURN ASIDE?

Well, if they are God's children, I will tell you what becomes of them, for I have seen it scores of times. Though they go aside, *they are not happy.* They cannot rest, for they are miserable even when they try to be cheerful. After a while they begin to remember their first Husband, for it was better with them then than now. They return; but there are scores and scores who, to say nothing of the shame they have to carry with them to their grave, are never afterwards the men they were before. They have to take a second place among their comrades. And even should sovereign grace so wonderfully bless their painful experience that they are fully restored, they can never mention the past without bitter regret. Their by-path serving for others' beacon, they will say to young people, "Never do as we have done; nothing but mischief comes of it."

In the vast majority of cases, however, they are not the Lord's people. So this is what comes of it. *Those who prove traitors to a profession they once made are the hardest people in the world to impress.* Doubtless, some of you, when you lived in the country, used always to be punctual at your usual place of worship, but since you have come to London, where your absence from any sanctuary is unnoticed, you rarely enter the courts of the Lord's house, nor would you have been here to-night but for some special inducement, —some country cousin or some particular friend having brought you. Though unknown to me, God scans your path. Well, here you are, and yet it may be to little profit. You have had counsels and cautions in such profusion that it is like pouring oil down a slab of marble to admonish you. May God of his omnipotent mercy break your obdurate heart, or there will be no hope for you! Such people frequently lose all conscience. They can go a great deal further in talking against religion than anybody else can. They will sometimes venture to say they know so much about it that they could expose it. Their boasts and their threats are alike unmeaning; but as boys whistle while they walk through the churchyard to keep their courage up, so do their vain talk and their senseless stories betray their stifled fear. They speak contemptuously of God while they justify themselves in a course for which their own conscience upbraids them. They go back—alas! some of them, to prove themselves the most abandoned sinners in the world. There could not have been a Judas to betray Christ had he not been first distinguished as a disciple who ventured to kiss his Master. You must pick from among the apostles to find an apostate. As the ringleaders in riotous transgression, when converted, often make the best revivalist preachers, so those that seem to be the most loyal subjects of Christ, when they become renegades, prove to be the bitterest foes and the blackest sinners.

Painful reminiscences rush over one's mind. Standing here now, in the midst of a great church, I call to mind things that have harrowed up my soul. God grant I may not see the like of them again! They go away!—ah, me! *full many of them go away to die in blank despair.* Did you ever read the life of Francis Spira? If you want to sleep to-night, do not take up that memoir. Did you ever read the life of John Child, a Baptist minister of about two hundred years ago? Mr. Keach gives it in one of his works. He was a man who knew the truth, and to a great extent had felt its power; but he went aside from it, and before he came to die his expressions were too terrible to listen to. The remorse and despair of his spirit chased everyone away. At last he laid violent hands upon himself. For any man to eat bread at the Lord's table, to drink of that cup of blessing, to mingle with the saints, join in their prayers and their hymns, professing to be a disciple of Christ, and then to go back and walk no more with him, is to venture on a course of no ordinary danger. When his conscience is again aroused, how he wishes that he had never been born! Could he annihilate his anguish-smitten soul, to terminate his existence might be accounted wise. But that is impossible. The relief he seeks

he cannot find when he takes the dreadful leap from suffering here to an aggravated form of misery hereafter, ten thousand times worse to endure. He seals his doom and makes his own damnation sure as he raises against himself a murdering hand. Do I address anyone here who is bereft of every ray of hope, and shivering on the brink of despair? To him I say,—While there is life, there is hope. Jesus Christ can forgive you. Return to him. He can wash you in his blood. He can make you clean, though your sin be as scarlet. But, oh! do not trifle, make no delay. Tarry no longer in your present condition; else, may be, you will fill up the measure of your iniquities or ever you are aware, and you may taste, even in this world, some beginning of the wrath to come. If not rescued as a trophy of grace right speedily, you may become a monument of God's wrath; a beacon to deter others from daring to turn aside. I speak solemnly; I cannot help it. So intensely do I feel the terror of that woe, and so confident am I that some of you are making light of it, that I would go down on my knees, and entreat you with tears to mind what you are at. You have got on the inclined plane, and you are going down, down, down. Your feet are even now on the slippery places from which multitudes have been cast down into destruction. How are they brought into desolation as in a moment! The Lord make haste to deliver you! May he stretch out his hand and rescue you! I can only call out to you. You seem to have got where I cannot reach you. Do not venture a footstep further in that dangerous road. Look to Jesus, look to Jesus; he can redeem your life from the pit by his sovereign grace, and he alone can do it. Then, as a wandering sheep, brought back to the fold, you shall adore his name.

III. My third enquiry is,—WHY SHOULD NOT WE GO AWAY AS THEY HAVE GONE?

Were we left to ourselves, I cannot tell you any reason why we should not go as they have gone. Nor, indeed, could I tell you why the best man here should not be the worst before to-morrow morning if the grace of God left him. John Bradford, you know, as he saw the poor criminals taken away to Tyburn to be executed, used to say, "There goes John Bradford but for the grace of God." And every one of us might say the same. To abide with Christ, however, is our only security, and we trust we shall never depart from him. But how can we make sure of this? The great thing is *to have a real foundation on Christ to begin with*,—genuine faith, vital godliness. The foundation is the first matter to be attended to in building a house. With a bad foundation, there cannot be a substantial house. You require a firm bottom, a sound groundwork, before you proceed to the superstructure. Do pray God that if your religion be a sham you may find it out now. Unless your hearts be deeply ploughed with genuine repentance, and unless you are thoroughly rooted and grounded in the faith, you may have some cause to suspect the reality of your conversion and the verity of the Holy Spirit's operation in you. May the Lord work in you a good beginning, and then you may rely upon it he will carry it on to the day of Jesus Christ.

Then, remember, dear brethren and sisters, if you would be preserved from falling, *you must be schooled in humility, and keep very low before the Lord.* When you are half-an-inch above the ground, you are that half-inch too high. Your safety is to be nothing. Trust Christ, but do not trust yourself. Rely on the Spirit of God, but do not rely on anything that is in yourself; no, not on a grace you have received, or on a gift you possess. Those do not slide that walk humbly with God. They are always safe whose entire dependence is upon the dear Redeemer. Be jealous of your obedience; be circumspect; be careful; take heed to yourselves; your walk and conversation cannot be too cautious. Many are lost through being too remiss, but none through being too scrupulous. The statutes of the Lord are so right that you cannot neglect them without diverging from the path of rectitude. Watch and pray. God help you to watch, or else you will get drowsy. Never neglect prayer. That is at the root of every defection. Retrogression commonly begins at the closet. To restrain prayer is to deaden the very pulse of life. "Watch unto prayer."

And, dear friends, *shun the company which has led other people astray.* Parley not with those whose jokes are profane. Keep right away from them. It is not for you to be seen standing, much less to be found sitting down, with men of loose manners and lewd converse. They can do you no good, but the evil they can bring upon you it would not be easy to estimate. You may have heard the story—but it is so good it will bear repeating—of the lady who advertised for a coachman and was waited upon by three candidates for the situation. She put to the first one this question: "I want a really good coachman to drive my pair of horses, and, therefore, I ask you how near you can drive to danger and yet be safe?" "Well," he said, "I could drive very near indeed: I could go within a foot of a precipice, without fear of any accident so long as I held the reins." She dismissed him with the remark that he would not do. To the next one who came she put the same question. "How near could you drive to danger?" Being determined to get the place, he said, "I could drive within a hair's breadth, and yet skilfully avoid any mishap." "You will not do," said she. When the third one came in, his mind was cast in another mould, so on the question being put to him, "How near could you drive to danger?" he said, "Madam, I never tried. It has always been a rule with me to drive as far from danger as I possibly can." The lady engaged him at once. In like manner I believe that the man who is careful to run no risks and to refrain from all equivocal conduct, having the fear of God in his heart, is most to be relied upon. If you are really built upon the Rock of Ages, you may meet the question without dismay, "Will ye also go away?" and you can reply without presumption, "No, Lord, I cannot and I will not leave thee; for to whom should I go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." So be it. "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it." Amen.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

A VISIT TO BETHLEHEM.

A Sermon*

PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 22ND, 1904,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,

On Lord's-day Evening, December 24th, 1854.

"Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us."—Luke ii. 15.

NOT to Bethlehem *as it now is*, but to Bethlehem *as it once was*, I would lead your meditation this evening.

Were you to visit the site of that ancient city of Judah *as it is at present*, you would find little enough to edify your hearts. About six miles south of Jerusalem, on the declivity of a hill, lies a small, irregular village, never at any time considerable either in its extent or because of the wealth of its inhabitants. The only building worthy of notice is a convent. Should your fancy paint, as you approach it, a courtyard, a stable, or a manger, you would be sorely disappointed on your arrival. Tawdry decorations are all that would greet your eyes,—rather adapted to obliterate than to preserve the sacred interest with which a Christian would regard the place. You might walk upon the marble floor of a chapel, and gaze on walls bedecked with pictures, and studded with the fantastic dolls and other nicknacks which are usually found in Popish places of worship. Within a small grotto, you might observe the exact spot that superstition has assigned to the nativity of our Lord; there, a star, composed of silver and precious stones, surrounded by golden lamps, might remind you, but merely as a parody, of the simple story of the Evangelists. Truly, Bethlehem was ever little,

*The accompanying Sermon is substantially the same as I preached on the Sunday evening before Christmas-day. Some of my members expressed their regret that the reporter was not present. I am not myself aware that there is any novelty, except in the arrangement. As for the truths themselves, they are the simple old facts in which the saints of all generations rejoice. Of course, it is not in my power to reproduce the exact words I then employed, but, with just the difference between the effusion of one's pen and the utterance of one's tongue, I now publish it, and pray God to own it with his gracious blessing.—C. H. S.

(Notwithstanding the above note, which is in Mr. Spurgeon's handwriting on the MS. of the sermon, the publishers cannot find any trace of its publication. They are very glad to be able to issue it just fifty years after it was preached.)

if not the least, among the thousands of Judah, and famous only for its historic associations.

So, beloved, "let us now go even unto Bethlehem" *as it was;*—let us, if possible, bring the wondrous story of that "Child born", that "Son given", down to our own times. Imagine the event to be occurring just now. I will try to paint the picture for you with vivid colours, that you may apprehend afresh the great truth, and be impressed, as you ought to be, with the facts concerning the birth of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

I propose now to make A VISIT TO BETHLEHEM, and I want five companions to render the visit instructive; so I would have, first, *an aged Jew;* next, *an ancient Gentile;* then, *a convinced sinner;* then, *a young believer;* and, last of all, *an advanced Christian.* Their remarks can scarcely fail to please and profit us. Afterwards, I should like to take *a whole family* to the manger, let them all look at the Divine Infant, and hear what each one has to say about him.

I. To begin, then, I WOULD GO TO BETHLEHEM WITH AN AGED JEW.

Come on, my venerable, long-bearded brother; thou art an Israelite, indeed, for thy name is Simeon. Dost thou see the Babe "wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger"? Yes, he does; and, overpowered by the sight, he clasps the Child in his arms, and exclaims, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." "Here," says this faithful son of Abraham, "is the fulfilment of a thousand prophecies and promises, the hope, the expectation, and the joy of my noble ancestry; here is the Antitype of all those mystic symbols and typical offerings enjoined in the laws of Moses. Thou, O Son of the Highest, art Abraham's promised Seed, the Shiloh whose coming Jacob foretold, great David's greater Son, and Israel's rightful King. Our prophets did herald thy coming in each prophetic page; our bards vied with one another which should chant thy praise in sweetest stanzas; and now, O happy hour, these poor dim eyes do greet thy beauteous form! It is enough,—and more than enough;—O God, I ask not that I may live any longer on earth!" So speaks the aged Jew; and, as he speaks, I mark the rapturous smile that lights up every feature of his face, and listen to the deep, mellow tones of his tremulous voice. As he gazes on the tender Babe, I hear him quote Isaiah's words, "He shall grow up before him as a tender plant;" and then, as he glances aside at the virgin-mother, descendant of the royal house of David, he quickly looks back to the sinless Babe, and says, "A root out of a dry ground." Farewell, venerable Jew, thy talk sounds sweetly in mine ears; may the day soon dawn when all thy brethren shall return to their fatherland, and there confess our Jesus as their Messiah and their King!

II. My next companion shall be AN ANCIENT GENTILE.

He is an intelligent man. Do not ask me any questions concerning his creed. Deeply versed in the works of God in nature, he has glimmering, flickering light enough to detect the moral darkness by which he is surrounded, albeit the truth of the gospel has not yet found an entrance into his heart. Call him a sceptic, from the

heathen point of view, if you please; but his is not a wilful perversion of the heart, it is rather that transition state of the mind wherein false hopes are rejected, but the true hope has not yet been espoused. This Gentile brother is staying at Jerusalem, and we walk and talk together as we bend our steps toward Bethlehem. He has told me what pleasure he feels in reading the Jewish Scriptures, and how he has often longed for the dawn of that day which their seers predict. Now we enter the house,—a star shines brightly in the sky, and hovers over the stable;—we look at the Child, and my comrade exclaims in ecstasy, "a light to lighten the Gentiles!" "Fair Child of promise," says he, "thy birth shall be a joy to all people! Prince of peace, thine shall be a peaceful reign! Kings shall bring presents unto thee; all nations shall serve thee. The poor shall rejoice in thine advent, for justice shall be done to them by thee; and oppressors shall tremble at thy coming, for judgment upon them shall be pronounced by thy lips." Then sweetly did he speak of the hopes which had bloomed in that birth-chamber. He looked as if, in that self-same hour, he saw the application of many an ancient promise, with the letter of which he was already acquainted, to the wonderful Child he there saw. It was refreshing to hear that Gentile quote, from the evangelical prophet, words like these, "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; *and a little child shall lead them.*"

As I bid adieu to this friend, you must allow me to offer you one or two of my own reflections. When God, in his anger, hid his face from the house of Jacob, he lifted up the light of his countenance on the Gentiles. When the fruitful land became a desert, the wilderness, at the same time, began to blossom as the garden of the Lord. Moses had anticipated both of these events, and the inspired prophets had foreseen one as much as the other. The heart of the Jewish people made gross, the heaviness of their eyes, and the dulness of their ears, are not more striking, as an exact fulfilment of divine judgment, than the extreme susceptibility of the Gentile mind to receive the evidence of our Lord's Messiahship, and to embrace his gospel. Thus had Jehovah said, fifteen hundred years before, "I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation." Marvel not, then, but admire the crisis in history when Paul and Barnabas were commissioned to say to the Jews who rejected the gospel, "*Lo, we turn to the Gentiles.*" I have consulted the map, and looked, with intense emotion, at the route which Paul and Barnabas took on their first missionary journey. Antioch, the city from which they went forth, is situated directly North of Jerusalem, and there, in no very unequal proportions, they could find both Jews and Gentiles. "To the Jew first," was according to the divine injunction; and, on their own nation rejecting the grace of God, lo, they turned to the Gentiles, with a result immediately following that greatly cheered them, for the Gentiles heard with gladness, and glorified the Word

of the Lord. As you follow the various journeys of the apostle Paul, you will see that his course was ever Northward, or, rather, in a North-Westerly direction, and so the tidings of the gospel travelled on until the Church of the redeemed found a central point in our highly-favoured isle.

I think I hear some of you say, "We are not antiquarian enough to appreciate the society of your two venerable companions." Well then, beloved, the three that follow shall be drawn from among yourselves, and it may be that you will discover your own thoughts expressed in the sketches I am about to add.

III. Next in order is THE AWAKENED SINNER.

Come here, my sister, I am glad to see you, and I shall have much pleasure in your company to Bethlehem. Why do you start back? Do not be afraid; there is nothing to terrify you here. Come in; come in. With trembling apprehension, my sister advances to the rough crib, where the young Child lies. She looks as if she feared to rejoice, and is beyond measure astonished at herself that she does not faint. She says to me, "And is this, sir, really and truly the great mystery of godliness? Do I, in that manger, behold 'God manifest in the flesh'? I expected to see something very different." Looking into her face, I clearly perceived that she could scarcely believe for joy. A humble, but not uninteresting visitor to the birthplace of my Lord is this trembling penitent. I wish I could have many like her out of this congregation to-night. You would see how mystery is dissolved in mercy. No flaming sword, turning every way, obstructs your entrance; no ticket of admission is demanded by a surly menial at the door; no favour is shown to rank or title; you may go freely in to see the noblest Child of woman born in the humblest cot wherein infant ever nestled. Nor does a visible tiara of light encircle his brow. Too humble, I assure you, for the fancy of the poet to describe, or the pencil of the artist to sketch,—like a poor man's child, he is wrapped in swaddling clothes, and cradled in a manger. It needs faith to believe what the eye of sense never could discern as you look upon "the Prince of life" in such humble guise.

IV. My fourth companion is A YOUNG BELIEVER.

Well, my brother, you and I have often had sweet communion together concerning the things of the kingdom; "let *us* now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us." I mark the sacred cheerfulness of my young friend's countenance as he approaches the incarnate mystery. Often have I heard him discussing curious doctrinal subtleties; but now, with calmness of spirit, he looks on the face of the Divine Child, and says, "Truth is sprung out of the earth, for a woman hath brought forth her Son; and righteousness hath looked down from heaven, for God hath, of a truth, revealed himself in that Babe." He looks so wistfully at the young Child, as if a fresh spring of holy gratitude had been opened in his heart. "No vision, no imagination, no myth here," he says, "but a real partaker of our flesh and blood; he has not taken on him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham. Heaven and earth have united

to make us blessed. Might and weakness have joined hands here!" He pauses to worship, then speaks again, "In what a small, weak, slender tabernacle dost thou, O glorious God, now deign to dwell! Surely, mercy and truth have here met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other. O Jesus, Saviour, thou art mercy itself,—the tender mercy of our God is embodied in thee. Thou art the Truth,—the very Truth which the prophets longed to see, and into which the angels desire to look,—the Truth my soul so long sought for, but never found till I beheld thy face. Once I thought that the Truth was hidden in some profound treatise, or in some learned book; but now I know that it is revealed in thee, O Jesus, my Kinsman, yet thy Father's equal! And, sweet Babe, thou art also righteousness,—the only righteousness that God can accept. What condescension, yet what patience! Ah, dear Child, how still thou dost lie! I wonder that, conscious of thy divine power, thou canst thus endure the weary, lingering hours of infancy with humility so strange, so rare! Methinks, if thou hadst stood by me, and watched over me, in my infant weakness, that would have been a service that I could well admire; but 'tis past imagination's utmost stretch to realize what it must be for thee to be thus feeble, thus helpless, thus needing to be fed and waited upon by an earthly mother. For the Wonderful, the mighty God, to stoop thus, is humility profound!"

So spake the young believer, and I liked his speech much, for I saw in him how faith could work by love, and how the end of controversy and argument is reached at Bethlehem, for "without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh."

V. Now I will go to Bethlehem with AN ADVANCED CHRISTIAN, such an one as Paul the aged, or John the divine; nay, rather with such an one as I might find among the circle of my own church-members.

Calm, peaceful, and benignant, he seems as if his training in the school of Christ, and the sacred anointing of the Holy Spirit, have made him like a child himself, as his character is ripening, and his fitness for the kingdom of heaven is becoming more apparent. Tears glistened in the old man's eyes as he looked with expressive fondness on that "Infant of eternal days." He spake not much, and what he said was not exactly like what any of my other companions had spoken. It was his manner to quote short sentences, with great exactness, from the Word of God. He uttered them slowly, pondered them deeply, and there was much spiritual unction in the accent with which he spake. I will just mention a few of the profitable sentences that he uttered. First he said, "No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even *the Son of Man which is in heaven;*" and he really appeared to see more in that passage than I had ever seen there;—Jesus, the Son of man, in heaven even while he was on earth! Then he looked at the Child, and said, "The same was in the beginning with God." After that, he uttered these three short sentences in succession, "In the beginning was the Word,"—"all things were made by him," "and the Word was made flesh." He looked as if he realized

what a great mystery it was that our Lord Jesus first made all things, and afterwards was himself "made flesh." Then he reverently bent his knee, clasped his hands, and exclaimed, "My Father's gift—'Behold, what manner of love!'"

As we retire from that manger and stable, that aged Christian puts his hand on my shoulder, and says, "Young man, I have often been to Bethlehem; it was a much-loved haunt of mine before thou wast born, and one sweet lesson I have learnt there which I should like to pass on to thee. The Infinite became finite; the Almighty consented to become weak; he, that upheld all things by the word of his power, willingly became helpless; he, that spake all worlds into existence, resigned for a while even the power of speech. In all these things, he fulfilled the will of his Father; so be not thou afraid, nor surprised with any amazement, if thou shouldst be dealt with in like manner, for his Father is also thy Father. Thou, who hast revelled in the ancient settlements of the everlasting covenant, mayest yet have to hang feebly on the mercies of the hour. Thou hast leaned on thy Saviour's breast at his table; but thou mayest presently be so weak that thou must rely on the nursing of a woman. Thy tongue has been touched as with a coal from the heavenly altar, but thy lips may yet be sealed as are those of an infant. If thou shouldst sink still deeper in humiliation, thou wilt never reach the depth to which Jesus descended in this one act of his condescension." "True, true," I replied, "my young brother hinted at the wondrous condescension of the Son of God; you have explained it to me more fully."

Thus, then, beloved, I have endeavoured to carry out my purpose of going to Bethlehem with five separate companions,—all representative persons. Alas, that some of you are not represented by any one of these characters! "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by?" Care ye not for this blessed nativity which marked of old "the fulness of time"? If ye die without a knowledge of this mystery, your lives will indeed be a fearful blank, and your eternal portion will be truly terrible.

VI. Give me your earnest attention, a little longer, while I try to change the line of meditation. It may please God that, while I attempt to CONDUCT A WHOLE FAMILY TO BETHLEHEM, some hearts, which have thus far resisted all my appeals, may yet yield to the Lord Jesus Christ.

A familiar picture will serve my purpose. Imagine this to be the evening of Christmas-day, and that a Christian father has all his household gathered with him around the fire. Desirous of blending instruction with pleasure, he proposes that "the birth of Christ" shall be the subject of their conversation, that every one of the children shall say something about it, and he will preach them a short sermon on each of their remarks. He calls Mary, their servant, into the room, and when all are comfortably seated they commence.

(1) After a simple sketch of the facts, the father turns to his youngest boy, and asks, "What have you to say, Willy?" The little fellow, who is just old enough to go to the Sunday-school,

repeats two lines that he has learnt to sing there,—many of you, no doubt, know them,—

"Jesus Christ, my Lord and Saviour,
Once became a child like me."

"Good, my dear," says the father,—"once became a child like me." Yes; Jesus was born into the world as other little babies are born. He was as little, as delicate, as weak, as other infants, and needed to be nursed as they do.

"'Almighty God became a man,
A babe like others seen:
As small in size, and weak of frame,
As babes have always been.

"'From thence he grew an infant mild,
By fair and due degrees;
And then became a bigger child,
And sat on Mary's knees.

"'At first held up for want of strength,
In time alone he ran;
Then grew a boy; a lad; at length,
A youth; at last, a man.'

"It is wrong to draw pictures of the little Jesus, and then say that they are like him. Wicked idolaters do that. But we ought to think of Jesus Christ as made in all things like unto his brethren. There was never a thing in which he was not like us, except that he had no sin. He used to eat, and drink, and sleep, and wake, and laugh, and cry, and fondle his mother, just as other children do. So it is quite right for you, Willy, to say, 'once became a child like me.'"

(2) "Now, John," said the father, addressing a lad rather older, "what have you to say?" "Well, father," said John, "if Jesus Christ was like us in some things, I do not think he could have had so many comforts as we have;—not such a nice nursery, nor such a snug bed. Was he not disturbed by the horses, and cows, and camels? It seems to me shocking that he had to live in a stable."

"That is a very proper remark, John," said his father. "We ought all of us to think how our blessed Lord cast in his lot with the poor. When those wise men came from the East, I daresay they were surprised, at first, to find that Jesus was a poor man's child; yet they fell down and worshipped him, and they opened their treasury, and presented to him very costly gifts,—gold, and frankincense, and myrrh. Ah! when the Son of God made that great stoop from heaven to earth, he passed the glittering palaces of kings, and the marble halls of the rich and the noble, and took up his abode in the lodgings of poverty. Still, he was 'born King of the Jews.' Now, John, did you ever read of a child being born a king before? Of course, you never did; children have been born princes, and heirs to a throne, but no other than Jesus was ever born a king. The poverty of our Saviour's circumstances is like a foil which sets off the glorious dignity of his person. You have read of good kings, such as David, and Hezekiah, and Josiah; yet, if they had not been kings, we should never have heard of them; but

it was quite otherwise with Jesus Christ. He was possessed of more true greatness in a stable than any other king ever possessed in a palace; but do not imagine it was only in his childhood that Jesus was the Kinsman of the poor. When he grew up to be a man, he said, 'The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.' Do you know, my children, that our comforts were purchased at the expense of his sufferings? 'He became poor that we, through his poverty, might be rich.' We ought, therefore, to thank and praise the blessed Jesus every time we remember how much worse off he was in this world than we are."

(3) "It is your turn now," said the father, as he looked at his little daughter,—an intelligent girl, who was just beginning to be of some assistance to her mother in the discharge of her daily domestic duties. Poor girl, she modestly hung down her head, for she remembered, just then, how frequently little acts of carelessness had exposed her to tender but faithful rebukes from her parents. At last, she said, "Oh, father, how good Jesus Christ was! He never did anything wrong." "Very true, my love," the father replied. "It is a sweet subject for meditation that you suggest. His nature was sinless, his thoughts were pure, his heart was transparent, and all his actions just and right. You have read of the lambs, which Moses in the law commanded the Jews to offer in sacrifice to God. They were all to be without spot or blemish; and if there had been one taint of impurity in the Child that was born of Mary, he could never have been our Saviour. Sometimes, we think naughty thoughts, and nobody knows it but God; and, sometimes, we do what is evil, but we are not found out. It was not so with the meek and lowly Saviour; he never had even one fault. His delight was in the law of the Lord, and in that law did he meditate day and night. Even when we do not commit any positive sin, we often forget to do our duty; but Jesus never did. He was like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season. He never disappointed any hopes that were set upon him."

"There now," said the father, "we have had three beautiful thoughts already,—Jesus Christ took our nature, he condescended to be very poor, and he was without sin."

(4) There was, in the room, a big boy, who had just come home from boarding school, to spend his Christmas holidays, so his father turned to this son, and said, "Fred, we must hear your remark next." Very short, very significant was Master Fred's response: "That Child had a wonderful mind."

"Indeed he had," said the father, "and it would be well for all of us if that mind were in us which was also in Christ Jesus. His mind was infinite, for he took part in the eternal counsels of God; but I would rather suggest to you another line of thought: 'In him was light.' The mind of Jesus was like light for its clearness and purity. We often see things through a misleading medium; we form wrong impressions, which we find it trouble enough afterwards to correct; but Jesus was of quick understanding to discern between

good and evil. His mind was never warped by prejudice; he saw things just as they are. Never had he to borrow other people's eyes, and the ideas hatched in other people's brains never guided his judgment. He had light in himself, and that light was the life of men, so capable was he ever of instructing the ignorant, and guiding their feet in the paths of peace. His heart was likewise pure, and that has more to do with the development of the mind, and the improvement of the understanding, than we are apt to suppose. No corrupt imagination ever tarnished the brightness of his vision. He was always in harmony with God, and always felt good-will toward man. You might well say, Fred, that he had a wonderful mind."

(5) The children having each made some observation, the father next addressed Mary, the servant. "Do not be timid," said he, "but speak out, and let us know your thought." "I was just a-thinking, sir," said Mary, "how humble it was of him to take upon himself the form of a servant." "Right, Mary, quite right; and it is always profitable to consider how Jesus came down to our low estate. We may well be reconciled to any 'lot' which Jesus voluntarily chose for himself. But there is more in your remark, as applicable to Bethlehem, and the nativity, than you perhaps imagined; for, according to Dr. Kitto's account of the inn, or *Caravanserai*, it was the servant's place that the holy family occupied. Imagine now a square pile of strong and lofty walls, built of brick upon a basement of stone, with one great archway entrance. These walls enclose a large open area with a well in the middle. In the centre is an inner quadrangle, consisting of a raised platform on all four sides covered with a kind of *piazza*, and then, in the wall behind, there are small doors leading to the little cells which form the lodgings. Such we may suppose to have been the 'inn' in which there was 'no room' for Mary and Joseph. Now for a description of the stable. It is formed of a covered avenue between the back wall of the lodging apartments and the outer wall of the whole building; thus it is on a level with the court, and three or four feet below the raised platform. The side walls of those cells, in the inner quadrangle, projecting behind into the courtyard, form recesses, or stalls, which servants and muleteers used for shelter in bad weather. Joseph and Mary seem to have found a retreat in one of these. There, it is supposed, the infant Jesus was born; and if it be so, how literally true is it that he took on him the form of a servant, and occupied the servant's apartment!"

(6) Once more the father seeks a fresh text, and, looking at his wife, he says, "My dear, you have taken a quiet interest in our conversations this evening; let us now hear your reflection. I am sure you can say something we shall all be pleased to hear." The mother looked absorbed in thought, she appeared to have a vivid picture of the whole scene before her, and her eye kindled as if she could actually see the little darling lying in the manger. She spoke most naturally and most maternally, too. "What a lovely Child! And yet," she added, with a deep sigh, "he, who is thus fairer than the children of men in his cradle, after a few short years, was so overwhelmed with anxiety, suffering, and anguish, that his visage

was more marred than that of any other man, and his form more than that of the sons of men."

A pensive sadness stole over every countenance as that godly mother offered her reflections. Woman's tenderness seemed to be sanctified by grace divine in her heart, and to give forth its richest fragrance. The father presently broke the stillness as he said, "Ah, my love, you have spoken best of all! His heart was broken with reproach; that humble birth was but the prelude to a life still more humble, and a death even more abased. Your feeling, my love, is a most precious evidence of your close relationship to him.

"'A faithful friend of grief partakes;
But union can be none
Betwixt a heart that melts like wax
And hearts as hard as stone;
Betwixt a head diffusing blood
And members sound and whole,
Betwixt an agonizing God.
And an unfeeling soul.'"

(7) "To close up now," said the father, glancing round with animated expression upon his household, "I suppose you will expect a few words from me. Much as I like your mother's observations, I think it would be hardly right, on such an auspicious day, to finish with anything melancholy and sad. You know that fathers are generally most thoughtful about the prospects of their children. I can look at you boys, and think, 'Never mind if you have a few hardships so long as you can struggle successfully against them.' Well now, I have been picturing to myself the manger, the Baby that lay in it, and Mary his mother watching lovingly over him; and I'll tell you what I thought. Those little hands will one day grasp the sceptre of universal empire; those little arms will one day grapple with the monster 'Death', and destroy it; those little feet shall tread on the serpent's neck, and crush that old deceiver's head; yea, and that little tongue, which hath not yet learned to articulate a word, shall, ere long, pour from his sweet lips such streams of eloquence as shall fertilize the minds of the whole human race, and infuse his teaching into the literature of the world; and again a little while, and that tongue shall pronounce the judgments of heaven on the destinies of all mankind. We have all thought it wonderful that the God of glory should stoop so low; but we shall one day think it more wonderful that the Man of sorrows should be exalted so high. Earth could find no place too base for him; heaven will scarcely find a place lofty enough for him. Then there is just this one thing to be said about Jesus Christ, he is 'the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.' We may change with circumstances, Jesus never did, and never will. When we look at him in the manger, we may say, 'He is the Wonderful, the Counsellor, the mighty God.' And when we see him exalted to his Father's right hand, we may exclaim, 'Behold the Man!'

"'His human heart he still retains,
Though 'throned in highest bliss,
And feels each tempted member's pains,
For our affliction's his.'"

So closed the series of observations by the various members of a Christian family around the Christmas fire. The father said it was time to retire, and bade them all "Good night;" and as the father said, so say I, "Good-night, and God bless you all!" Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

LUKE II. 1—19.

We will now read the story of our Saviour's birth as it is recorded in the Gospel according to Luke.

Verses 1—5. *And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judæa, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) to be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.*

Little did any idea enter into Cæsar's head that he was accomplishing the purpose of God by bringing Mary to Bethlehem, at that particular time, so that her child might be born there. But God can accomplish the purposes of his providence, and of his grace, in any way that he pleases; and although Cæsar is not aware of all that is involved in his action, his decree, which he intends simply to be a means of registering his subjects, and of filling his exchequer, is to be overruled by God for the fulfilment of the prophecy, uttered centuries before the event happened, that Christ must be born at Bethlehem.

It may seem, to some of you, a strange thing that there should be an imperial edict, issued from Rome, which should have an important influence upon the place of birth of this Child; yet I do not doubt that, in God's esteem, the whole of the great Roman Empire was of very small account in comparison with his Son, our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ; and to-day, the thrones and dominions of the mightiest monarchs are only like the small cogs of the wheels of divine providence where the welfare of even the least of the Lord's people is concerned. He reckons not events according to their apparent importance; the standard of the sanctuary is a very different measure from that which worldlings use. When any purpose of God is to be accomplished, all other things will be subordinated to it.

6, 7. *And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.*

Now hath heavenly glory wedded earthly poverty; and, henceforth, let no man dare to despise the poor and needy, since the Son of the Highest is born in a stable, and cradled in a manger. How low the King of glory stoops, and how gloriously he uplifts the lowly to share his glory!

8, 9. *And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.*

For such is the condition, even of gracious souls, that the near approach of the divine glory begets in them trembling and alarm. Oh, how wondrously changed shall we be when we are able to bear even the glories of heaven! Have you ever thought of this, dear friends? The beloved apostle, John, saw Christ in his glory, and he wrote, "When I saw him, I

fell at his feet, as dead;" and these shepherds, even at the sight of "the angel of the Lord," "were sore afraid." You and I, beloved, must undergo a marvellous change before we shall be able to be at home with God in his glory; but that change shall, through his abundant grace, take place ere long.

10—12. *And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.*

"This shall be a sign unto you," said the angel to the shepherds; and this is the ensign of the Christ of God even unto this day. There are some, who are constantly bringing discredit upon religion by their pompous ritual and gorgeous ceremonies, and it is buried beneath the weight of their sensuous worship; but the living Christ is still found in simple, lowly guise, "wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger."

13. *And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host—*

They had heard the heavenly herald's proclamation, and hurried down to join him in publishing the glad tidings. They could not bear that only one angel should announce the birth of the Christ; so, "suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host"—

13—19. *Praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.*

Mary laid these things up in store, and pondered them, giving them their due weight and value. Oh, that we did the same with every truth that we learn!

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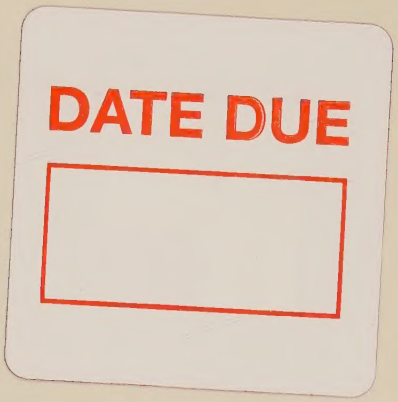

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